

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CHORAL ODES
OF SENECA'S THYESTES

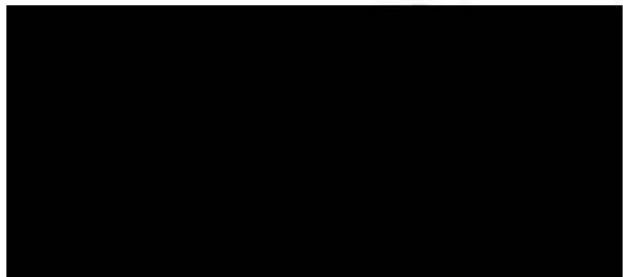
by

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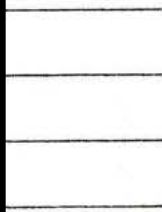
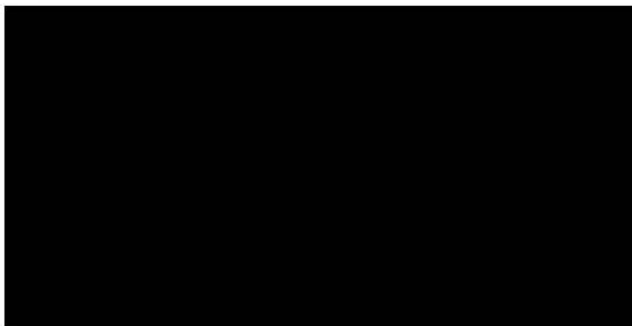
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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an examination of the dramatic, poetic and philosophical aspects of the four choral odes in Seneca's Thyestes. A chapter is devoted to each of these aspects.

Criticism of the Thyestes, and of the other tragedies, has tended to discredit Seneca as a dramatist, some critics stressing a philosophical influence on the plays, while others concentrate on making comparisons between the Senecan plays and Greek precursors. Although some critics do find merit in the tragedies, the majority have denied Seneca's work much dramatic or literary value. In this thesis, therefore, I show that Seneca's Thyestes is a play which provides firm evidence of the author's excellence and finesse as a writer of drama.


In Chapter I, I discuss the dramatic aspects of the odes, indicating that the structure of the play relies on a thematic basis rather than on a continuous action or plot. The odes play a significant role in this structure, being closely connected with the action and highlighting its important elements. A notable feature of the play is the many deliberate verbal echoes between certain characters and the Chorus. Where such similarities occur between ode and Act, there is also a marked ironic contrast. This type of contrast is evident in Odes I to III, while Ode IV performs a slightly different function. The Chorus pursue one train of thought, peace and security, but the possibility of such ideals being attained is denied

by the events in the play. It is only in Ode IV that the Chorus realise the true situation, and here they resign themselves to facing total destruction. The subsequent irony is that though Atreus achieves all his evil wishes, the world does not in fact come to an end. In my examination of these aspects of the odes, the verbal echoes and the irony, I attempt to show that the odes are highly relevant to the structure of the play.

The poetic elements of the odes are examined in two sections in Chapter II. In Part I, I discuss Seneca's use of metre, language and rhetorical tropes. Seneca's use of metre has been much criticised for monotony and dullness. I attempt to show that his handling of metre does have its virtues, while the other aspects display his poetic abilities convincingly. I offer also some discussion on the place of rhetoric in Senecan drama, since criticism has tended to find fault with this element. In Part II, I discuss some parallel passages between Seneca's odes and works by Horace and Virgil in order to show that certain suggested borrowings do not exist, while the genuine borrowings have been carefully integrated into the particular context.

Chapter III is devoted to the philosophical aspects. The moralising nature of the odes is closely examined to determine whether they reflect theories from any particular school of philosophy or whether the origin of their material is literary and traditional. Certain critics have placed undue emphasis on Seneca's interest in the doctrines of Stoic philosophy and

assumed that Stoic theories have influenced the Thyestes. My approach in this Chapter is, therefore, initially a negative one, to show that Seneca's ideas in his prose works are not entirely Stoic and that the Thyestes is not intended to portray Stoic theories. While the odes form the focal point of the discussion, the rest of the play and the characterization of Atreus and Thyestes are also discussed. The presentation of the two main characters is seen to show conclusively that Stoicism has not influenced the composition of the play. More positively, I suggest that the bulk of the material in the odes, and in the play, is derived from a literary tradition and that Seneca has composed a well-constructed play containing a penetrating study of human passion.



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For Dr. E.Y. Nisbet,
in appreciation for
her fine teaching,
good advice and friendship -
sic itur ad astra.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is a study of the quality and function of the choral odes in Seneca's Thyestes. The examination will be carried out in three chapters covering the dramatic, poetic and philosophical aspects of each of the four odes.

The tragedies of Seneca have until recently been much maligned as examples of creative writing. For a long time few critics could find any literary value in the plays. The odes in particular have received much adverse criticism. "The odes are simple and direct in style, but they lack originality, and not much poetry is to be found in them"¹. Léon Herrmann states that Seneca has 'dissocié le lyrisme de l'action'.² C.W. Mendell³ presents similarly unfavourable views when he describes the Chorus in Senecan drama as performing "hardly more than a useful mechanical function" and he concludes that "they are rather an accessory to the play than an integral part of it". According to such criticism Seneca has shown little talent as a dramatist or as a poet. Critics have tended to find value in the plays chiefly in their relationship to and portrayal of themes which occur in Seneca's prose writings. The plays have been regarded as didactic in purpose and intended to illustrate certain philosophical doctrines. B. Marti,⁴ in particular, emphasises the Stoic nature of the plays in her argument that "Seneca realised that drama ... might become a useful illustration" of

his teachings in his prose works. In such approaches to the plays the philosophical elements, which certainly exist though in varying degrees, are stressed while little effort is made to discern the other, more purely literary, qualities in the drama.

In recent years there have been studies which indicate that Seneca was more than a writer of philosophy, that he was a capable dramatic poet. C.D.N. Costa⁵ follows this trend, showing that Senecan tragedy has literary worth, that its rhetorical language is a necessary and natural part of Seneca's literary era, and that although there is a philosophical influence, it is not of primary importance. Above all he indicates that Seneca was a poet; he wrote passages "of great lyrical charm" (p.105) and the choral odes show "the range of descriptive and reflective poetry which Seneca was capable of writing" (p.110). A. Dewey's thesis⁶ contains a good analysis of the structure of the Thyestes and of the structural importance of the choral odes. J.P. Poe⁷ has found high literary quality in the Thyestes. He studies, in particular, the theme of furor and its satisfaction in the play, showing that there is nothing especially Stoic about this topic. He finds the play well constructed and dramatic in its presentation of themes and in its portrayal of character.

The present thesis is devoted to a study of the Thyestes. This is a composition which in my view exhibits some of Seneca's best dramatic and poetic skills. The whole play, its structure, main characters and purpose will be considered,

but it is the four choral odes which will form the focal point. I believe that, in the Thyestes, the odes play an important role in the structure of the whole, and an understanding of the function of the odes leads to a better understanding of the play.

A question of primary importance is whether the tragedies of Seneca were actually performed as plays upon a stage. The answer to this question will affect one's critical approach to individual plays. It is unfortunate that Seneca himself offers no clear evidence in his prose works of his interest and intentions in composing tragedies. Certainly he shows familiarity with the theatre of his day (cf. Ep. 8.8; 84.10 and De Ben. VII 12.4, perhaps also Ep. 80.7ff.). He also indicates a knowledge of emotional acting (e.g. Ep. 11.7 and De Ira II 17.1), although one cannot tell whether he is referring to tragedy or comedy.⁸

The more common view among the critics is that Seneca's plays were not intended for performance. Representative of this opinion are W. Beare and O. Zwierlein.⁹ Beare remarks (p.352) that in the Roman Empire plays were often written for declamation (e.g. Juvenal S. I.3-6) but that there is "no certain information" about stage performance. With regard to the plays of Seneca he detects many practical problems, e.g. the murders on-stage in H.F. and Med. which have no parallel in Greek tragedy. There is also, he comments, insufficient information about exits and entrances, problems which Zwierlein has found insurmountable. Critics have found difficulties not

only in the actions of the plays, but also in their language. It has been criticised as over-subtle for the stage. Steidle¹⁰ uses this as an argument against performance.

Most of the objections of the critics mentioned above can be answered and there is, in fact, evidence which supports the idea that Seneca's plays can be and were performed. Beare seems to have disregarded much of the external evidence for stage performances of drama. One should not overlook the evidence for Pomponius Secundus¹¹ which indicates public performance of some of his work. There are indeed several references among ancient writers to the reading and recitation of plays.¹² But there are also passages which clearly indicate the existence and popularity of stage performances.¹³ Older plays were revived; excerpts from them were reworked and performed, but unfortunately there is little evidence for the production of plays by dramatists of the Empire. Some support for the theory of performance has been found by M. Bieber in the fact that several frescoes and wall-paintings depict scenes which can be paralleled in Seneca's plays. The basis of her argument is, however, rather tenuous and her results unconvincing.

There has been a reaction in recent years against the work of Zwierlein. Representative of it is the comment of F.H. Sandbach¹⁴: "that they (the plays) were not intended for the stage is often asserted and may be true, but does not follow from their nature." It would not be true to say that the plays offer no information concerning exits and

entrances. Several plays do, e.g. H.F. lines 202ff., 329ff., 520ff. and 827ff.; Oed. lines 401f. and 911ff.; Ag. lines 408ff., 586ff., 778ff. and 800ff. As for the problem of producing some of the more violent scenes, one should remember the spectacles in Aeschylus, Supplices (perhaps also Prometheus Vincetus) and Euripides, Medea and Bacchae. There are elements in these plays which do not differ much from Senecan drama. The only parallels, however, for on-stage murders would be in the mimes which were staged frequently during the Empire. In view of the latter, especially, it might seem possible for Seneca's tragedies to be produced. In connection with Steidle's remarks on subtle language, one might bear in mind some of the obscurities of the Aeschylean Choruses about which no objections have been made concerning performance. It is true that Senecan drama relies on many verbal effects and one might note the intricate, ambiguous and ironic statements which are prevalent in the Thyestes. But this fact does not in itself prove that the play cannot be staged.

Finally it should not be forgotten that Senecan tragedies had a considerable influence on Renaissance drama whose plays contain many of the features which Zwierlein termed "unstageable"¹⁵. Seneca's plays were performed on the stage in England in the sixteenth century (cf. Bieber p.255) and the Medea, Thyestes and Oedipus have been produced in this century. These successful productions prove that Seneca's plays are capable of being staged. I would suggest that, in view of the evidence from ancient and Renaissance times,

Seneca's plays could have been performed in Imperial Rome. But one cannot say decisively that they were actually staged. It would seem that the plays could have been recited before a small audience. But this does not preclude a dramatically presented reading. Even critics who deny performance agree that there is much good drama in Senecan tragedy (cf. Beare p.347). However, on the basis of the available evidence, it seems unlikely that a conclusive decision can be made on the question of performance.

One's critical attitude to Seneca's dramas cannot, therefore, be determined by assumptions about how the plays were produced or presented. However, in criticising a play such as the Thyestes one should bear in mind that Seneca has employed dramatic form. Even if the Thyestes was never actually produced on the stage, it is still a dramatic presentation of certain characters and themes. In its essential features it adheres to the tradition of fifth century Greece. The following chapters are intended to show that there is, in the Thyestes, between each Act and ode a closely-woven, thematic connection established by the odes. The examination of how these connections are made will show that Seneca has composed a well-structured work of dramatic and literary worth.

CHAPTER I

DRAMATIC ASPECTS

The object of this chapter is to examine the dramatic function of the four choral odes in Seneca's Thyestes and to indicate Seneca's creative achievement as a dramatist. Each ode will be analysed to assess its dramatic importance in the play as a whole. Dramatic unity is a quality which many critics have found lacking in Senecan tragedy. Ulrich Knoche,¹ for example, refers to Thyestes as being "zu einer losen Bilderfolge aufgelöst" (p.477). B. Marti has commented on the play's lack of dramatic and poetic qualities since the dramatic structure is only a "sugarcoating" (p.219). N. Pratt comments that "themes are conventional and as a rule artistically faulty in their lack of organic relation to the dramatic action" (p.6).

There is, however, some more recent criticism which gives due consideration to the structure of the plays, the development or occurrence of dramatic themes and the relevance of the choral odes. The study by A. Dewey is particularly noteworthy for its assessment of the Chorus' contribution. In this chapter I intend to indicate the relevance of the Odes to the dramatic action in the Thyestes.

The first Act of Seneca's Thyestes consists of a dialogue between the ghost of Tantalus² and the Fury. It introduces the all-pervasive theme of evil. The Act is important for its foreshadowing of the play's events and its introduction

of themes, ideas and images which grow in significance as the play progresses.

Tantalus is aware of the evil inherent in the House of Pelops (21-23). He would avert its fate if he could (90-95). He is paying eternally for his crimes but would even suffer more if his suffering would prevent the fulfilment of the Fury's curse. His protests are in vain, however, for he has no control over a power such as the Fury symbolises; indeed, he has no control over himself. He becomes the instrument of evil, just like some dirus vapor permeating the mind of Atreus and the whole House with ira, furor and dolor.

The Fury's two speeches (23ff. and 101ff.) give a very eloquent and chilling introduction to the events of the play. Seneca makes use of the traditional idea that crime and punishment form an endless chain in an accursed family³ (e.g. 18-32 and 40-48). But this Fury's predictions are surely much blacker, more inhuman in their comprehensiveness than anything before this. The prologue offers no compensating factor, no indication of an improved situation as would have been signified by the intervention of a deity (as, for example, in Aeschylus, Eumenides). One should note in this first Act the emphasis on the complete reversal of all things natural and ordered. Nature herself is infected by this presence of unbridled evil; the destruction to come should be universal,

non sit a vestris malis

immune caelum

nox alta fiat, excidat caelo dies. (48-51)

The Fury visualises the effect its evil will have on the world and describes it as already happening,

sentit introitus tuos

domus et nefando tota contactu horruit,

..... cernis ut fontes liquor

introrsus actus linquat, ut ripae vacent? (103ff.)

As a climax to its list of abnormal occurrences, the Fury predicts an eclipse of the sun,

en ipse Titan dubitat an iubeat sequi

cogatque habenis ire periturum diem. (120-121)

These predicted phenomena actually do take place in the course of the play, occurring at some of its important moments. For example, when Atreus feels the first stirrings of inspiration towards his dreadful crime (262-265), there is thunder in a clear sky and the household gods avert their faces. In Act IV we learn from the Messenger of the unnatural occurrences which accompanied Atreus' murder of Thyestes' sons and his preparations for the banquet (696ff. and 765ff.). The climax to these phenomena, on earth and in the sky, is the actual eclipse of the sun, announced by the Messenger and described in detail by a horrified Chorus in Ode IV. It is the Chorus who seize upon this event as a herald of the end of the world.

The first Act has, in effect, forecasted complete and inevitable disaster for the characters of the play before the action of the play has really begun. There has been no suggestion of the defeat of this evil power. The despair of

Tantalus and the exultation of the Fury leave a heavy cloud of gloom overhead when the Chorus make their first entrance.

Ode I begins with a prayer beseeching whoever of the gods cherishes the land to protect Argos and its environs from further troubles (122ff.). The Chorus deplore the constant waves of evil which have swept over the House of Pelops since the deception of Myrtilus and the crime of Tantalus (133ff.). They state that enough wrong has been done (138) and pray that strife is ended (136ff.). Lines 149-51 express forcefully the fact that Tantalus has received his due punishment, which is then described in detail (152-75).

The dire prophecies of Act I, however, preceding this ode, render the Chorus' prayer forlorn and vain.⁴ Furthermore, there is a very close parallelism in language, as well as theme, between the ode and Act I. The Fury and the Chorus will be seen to use the same terms of reference but for quite different reasons and the effect of the ode consequently becomes ironic.

The first part of the ode refers to familiar features of the landscape of the Peloponnesus, describing them as they normally appear (121-31). This scenery, which forms part of the Chorus' appeal, is a landscape which the gods should love and protect (cf. 124 and 132). The Fury, however, has already described the same landscape reflecting the complete dominance of the power of evil. Some examples will show how Seneca has achieved ironic verbal similarities between the Fury and the Chorus. In lines 126ff. the Chorus give a

lyrical description of the snows of Taygetus;

si quis Taygeti conspicuas nives
 quas cum Sarmaticus tempore frigido
 in summis Boreas composuit iugis
 aestas veliferis solvit Etesiis.

These lines suggest the natural and regular progression of the seasons which symbolises often in poetry the regularity which characterises man's life. The Fury, however, has just given the opposite picture of Cithaeron;

et Cithaeronis iuga
 stant parte nulla cana deposita nive (117-8).

Cithaeron has lost its snows through the presence of evil which, therefore, overrides the natural order. In lines 124-5 the Chorus describe the Isthmus which the Fury visualized in quite a different way (111-4). Similarly, the Chorus' lucidus Alpheos (130-1) contrasts with the scene in lines 116-7. The success of the Chorus' prayer would depend on the existence of a protective deity as suggested by lines 122ff. However, the Fury indicated that the landscape is already affected by evil, and therefore no protective deity is present.

The theme of the Chorus' prayer is that enough crime has already been committed and that it should not continue. We must assume from their words that they have experienced a period of great civil strife,

alternae scelerum ne redeant vices
 nec succedat avo deterior nepos
 et maior placeat culpa minoribus. (133-5).

But again their echoes of the Fury's predictions weaken the prayer. The Fury, inciting Tantalus to perform his task, prophesies the continuance of crime;

certetur omni scelere et alterna vice
stringatur ensis; (25-6)

and the handing down of crime from father to son;

rabies parentum duret et longum nefas
eat in nepotes; (28-9).

Not only will acts of criminal vengeance continue, but they will increase in their wickedness as each crime is avenged (30-2).

The Chorus recall past crimes, especially that of Tantalus, who offended the gods (cf. 148) and was punished. His feast is regarded by the Chorus as part of the ancient chain of events which brought disaster upon the House of Pelops and which was finally punished. Tantalus' penalty forms a precedent for the ending of present crime (cf. 132ff.). The Fury, however, uses past precedents not as examples of wickedness receiving its deserts but as examples of action to be followed in the future. The Thracium ... nefas is remembered and the feast for Thyestes is predicted (56ff.).⁵ With malevolent relish the Fury invites Tantalus to a new feast, one to which he is in fact no stranger (62ff.). The themes of eating and drinking, of appetite and desire for satisfaction are prevalent in the play (e.g. 136-8 and the recurrence of satis in Acts II and V).⁶ It is the torture of Tantalus by sitis and fames which becomes the focal point of the first ode. The Chorus pray that crime has finally

reached an end, but they do not know, as the audience does, that although individual crimes may be punished man's capacity for evil will continue to flourish, even to expand.

The placing of this ode after the announcements of Act I, together with the careful reminiscences of language and theme, form a marked contrast between Act and ode. The audience, with their fuller knowledge of the situation, can perceive the ironic interplay between Act and ode which the dramatist has skilfully created, the Fury predicting more crime while the Chorus look for peace. It will become evident in the course of this study that this interplay occurs throughout the play. At the close of Ode I, the Chorus express the futility of Tantalus' exertions to quench his thirst in a fine para prosdokian,

hic bibit

altum de rapido gurgite pulverem. (174-5).

We have already witnessed in Act I the futility of Tantalus' opposition to the Fury. The course of the whole play seems to lead inexorably towards pulverem. All action, prayers and anxieties on the part of the Chorus and Thyestes are in vain in face of the evil force embodied in Atreus.

There is an immediate contrast in atmosphere between Ode I and Act II. The ideas and sentiments of the ode have been presented in such a way as to be ironic and the final line struck a pessimistic note of complete futility. Atreus' entrance marks a strong contrast as he comes thundering upon the stage, totally dominating the ensuing action.

This Act is particularly important for its introduction of the character of Atreus and, indirectly, of Thyestes. Atreus' first speech overflows with vindictiveness (176-204). The following dialogue with the attendant serves to demonstrate just how evil a person and king Atreus is (204-333). He considers it the worst possible slight for a king to go unavenged (176-8). He believes in violence and oppression (205-7 and 210-11), rejecting all honourable and just concepts such as honestas, pudor, sanctitas, pietas, fides (214-8). He has no qualms about fratricide (219f.) since he feels that his grievances will justify the means of vengeance. As the Act progresses the character of Atreus soon assumes inhuman proportions.

..... dira Furiarum cohors
discorsque Erinys veniat et geminas faces
Megaera quatiens (250-2)

He wants to be filled with maiore monstro (254) and his wish is granted when he feels a great tumultus within him (260ff.). Lines 290-4 hint at the "transformation" which begins now and is complete by Act V. In the rhetorical build-up of these lines, the climax is fratrem videbit. This is a prospect more fearful than the thunder of Jupiter. The apparent anti-climax of these words is in fact ironic. Atreus is above Jupiter or any other power of an ordered universe. He is right in thinking this for, by Act V, he can claim in his triumph,

Aequalis astris gradior et cunctos super

altum superbo vertice attingens polum. (885-6)

Atreus also gives a picture of Thyestes' character. He regards him as someone not unlike himself, treacherous (193-5) and capable of atrocities (193-5). In line 219f. he describes the past crimes of his brother. When he begins to form his plan, he comments,

dignum est Thyeste facinus et dignum Atreo. (271)

Thyestes is a man as keen for power as Atreus is and willing to achieve it by any means. The attendant, however, suggests that hardship may have changed Thyestes (305), an idea which is dismissed by Atreus. He plans to lure Thyestes back with the promise of power, and he succeeds.

It is notable in this Act that Atreus echoes the language and thought of the Fury. These echoes emphasise the ironic contrast in tone already observed in Ode I. The initial contrast to Ode I has been noted in Atreus' determination to be avenged, and it is furthered by lines such as,

non satis magno meum

ardet furore pectus, impleri iuvat

maiore monstro. (252-4)

The Chorus' statement that peccatum satis est (138) is hardly a description of the present situation, for the curse of Act I is now being fulfilled. Atreus is being possessed by the caecus furor of line 27. His cry of bene est, abunde est (279) is a sinister recollection of the Fury's words in line 105 actum est abunde. In this way the two Acts combine to demonstrate the predominance of evil. The ode separating

them is carefully connected to both through language and theme. The sentiments of the Chorus, however, and their prayer for peace stand out against this background of gloom and wickedness.

The second ode is motivated by the news of a reconciliation between the brothers and by the themes dominant in Act II. The content of the ode, briefly, is as follows. Having remarked upon the apparent return to peace,⁷ the Chorus ask what furor drives men who are cupidi arcium to seek power by unscrupulous means and wield it unjustly (339ff.). In a negative preamble, they describe the only true rex (344-64),⁸ a man who does not cherish worldly or material benefits such as rich clothing and furniture (345-7) or treasures to be found on land or water, anywhere in the world (353-7). Neither storm nor sea concerns him since he has no great fortune at stake (358-62). He is unafraid of threats to his life; indeed, living secure in his confidence, he greets death happily (363-8). True kingship is in fact kingship of the mind,

mens regnum bona possidet (380).

Thus, argue the Chorus, returning to their initial topic of warfare and strife, a true king needs no trappings of war (381-7). This section dealing with the rex is neatly rounded off:

rex est qui metuit nihil,
rex est qui cupiet nihil,
hoc regnum sibi quisque dat. (388-90)⁹

The last section of the ode (391-403) forms a short ode in it-

self. The Chorus consider their own position, expressing a desire to live a secluded, peaceful life with the emphasis very much on obscurity. Such a life is preferable to being pre-eminent, in a precarious position of power and dying ignotus ... sibi (403).

As was the case with Ode I, there are several thematic and some verbal connections between Ode II and Act II which bind the two very closely. The same careful linking will be seen also with Act III. Again, it will be noticed that these connections form a contrast between Act and ode, often with ironical undertones. In Ode I the Chorus cried out peccatum satis est and this was followed by Atreus' schemes and plots. Here, the Chorus ask,

Quis vos exagitat furor
 alternis¹⁰ dare sanguinem
 et sceptrum scelere aggredi? (340-2).

They believe they know the answer. The furor lies in man's avarice and evil tendencies. This may be part of the real answer but the question is ironical because the furor,¹¹ which has caused past crimes and is again bringing down destruction, has been witnessed already in Act I and its effects on Atreus observed in Act II. Even the phrase alternis dare has more sinister connotations than the Chorus might realise; for this process of "an eye for an eye" was predicted in Act I by the Fury and is now taking place.

The bulk of the ode is concerned with true kingship, which is the possession of a mens bona (380).¹² Act II pre-

sented our first king in this play; Atreus and his concept of power were emphatically demonstrated. Nothing further from the Chorus' beliefs could have been stated. This is stressed by close links between Atreus' debate on kingship with his attendant and this ode. One might compare Atreus' demands for action, vengeance and bloodshed in lines 176ff., especially lines 180ff., with the Chorus' view that the true king has no fear, no need to fight and does not require instruments of war (381-7). In the dialogue beginning at line 204, Atreus reveals his disregard for fama, that is here, "a good reputation" with his subjects, his use of metus as a means to rule, his preference for false favor, his rejection of honesta and his motto,

qua iuvat reges eant. (218)

This can be compared to the Chorus in lines 348-52 where they systematically contradict Atreus' principles of government. Atreus is very definitely not the right kind of rex; he is not a rex at all in the Chorus' sense.

Since Thyestes has not yet appeared it might seem that this ode is to prepare the way for his entrance as someone who might be closer to the Chorus' ideal. The only information we have had about him so far consists largely of Atreus' slanders, accusations and suspicions. The attendant, however, did suggest another possibility (305). This suggestion, together with the idealistic ode, may indicate that Atreus' opinion of Thyestes is incorrect. The dramatist has executed a careful build-up in anticipation at this point in the play.

It only needs the appearance of Thyestes to confirm Atreus' suspicions or justify the Chorus' belief in the existence of a mens ... bona. It will be seen in the discussion of Act III that Thyestes is neither completely on one side or the other. The introduction to Act III, and possibly also an indication of the type of character to be revealed, begins with the final section to Ode II.

These last lines contain a more personal and lyrical expression of the theme of the ode,

Stet quicumque volet potens
 aulae culmine lubrico:
 me dulcis saturet quies;
 obscuro positus loco
 leni perfruar otio,
 nullis nota Quiritibus
 aetas per tacitum fluat. (391-7)

The emphasis is on being unknown; note obscurus, nullis nota Quiritibus and plebeius. Positions of power are fraught with danger and, therefore, it is better to lead a humble, insignificant life. Such a life, free from dangerous temptations, is the only way in which a man can be notus sibi. It is notable that the ideal rex is a man who is tuto positus loco (365), while the Chorus desire to be placed in obscurus ... loco (394). The similarity in wording is not accidental. It would seem, from the Chorus' opinion here, that the only way to avoid ruin is to avoid power. Lines 391ff. clearly indicate that the conventional regnum is something undesirable and that obscurity

is the proper environment for leading a good life. Thyestes appears to have believed this also. He withdrew into a humble and hard life of exile but then mistakenly returned into the sphere of power and met a terrible fate.

Commenting on this last section, Dewey writes, "The Chorus aspires to the serenity and imperturbability which the kingship of the mind bestows."¹³ She notes also the "fine dramatic irony"¹⁴ of the contrast between Atreus and the idealised rex. The Chorus' idealising creates an awareness of better possibilities which, however, do not materialise in the play. The final irony is that the Chorus, looking towards a death nullo cum strepitu (399), must eventually face destruction mundo secum pereunte (884).

A discussion of the ode's tone and the Chorus' reaction to and knowledge of Act II is incomplete without consideration of the question whether we include and how we interpret lines 336-8;

Tandem regia nobilis
antiqui genus Inachi
fratrum composuit minas.¹⁵

The verb componere could have two distinct meanings¹⁶ here, either "to oppose", "to match in combat" or "to allay", "pacify". There are no firm examples of componere being used in the first sense among the eight other uses of the word in Senecan tragedy.¹⁷ However, there are examples in Senecan prose which show that Seneca could use the verb in the first sense in similar contexts and the example in N.Q. 5.18.6

(quoted in footnote 17) is a very close parallel to Thyestes, lines 338-9. The primary meaning of line 338 is "has calmed the brothers' threats" and the three lines (336-8) together indicate that the Chorus are ignorant¹⁸ of Atreus' treacherous plan, but know of Thyestes' recall. This is the usual interpretation of the lines.¹⁹ However, it seems impossible to exclude a secondary meaning in line 338, i.e. "has set the threatening brothers face to face". This meaning is not intended by the Chorus, but it can scarcely be overlooked by the audience with its fuller knowledge of the present situation.

The first meaning is the obvious one, resulting in a clear example of dramatic irony; in their ignorance the Chorus state that the history of crime has at last reached an end (cf. Ode I 136-8), a view which contradicts the audience's knowledge, gained from the Prologue and Act II. The second meaning adds another level of irony. The Chorus are ignorant of the truth, but their expression can be understood as reflecting an appreciation of the actual situation. In view of the doubt about the exact meaning of componere and the complex irony which results from its ambiguity, I would suggest that Seneca has deliberately used an ambiguous phrase in line 338.²⁰ A second source of irony occurs in the marked contrast between the ideal rex and the Atreus of Act. II. Instances of this irony have already been noted and it will be seen that Thyestes also contrasts with the idealised figure in Ode II. These ironic contrasts emphasise the fact that the Chorus' idealising is a vain pursuit (cf. the futility of the prayer in Ode I).

Finally, there are other aspects of this ode, requiring comment, which increase the ironical tone. The irony here takes the form of what I would call different levels of chronological reference. Basically there is the time of the play's traditional story, the Mycenaean Age of Greece (336-8). On top of this there are references to people, places and events which are designed specifically for a Roman audience e.g. the names familiar from other Roman literature (cf. Tyria 345, Dahae 370, Danuvium 376). The Parthians (cf. 383-4) played a prominent part in Roman history, but in the ode they are transported back to Mycenaean Greece. Quiritibus (396) is a striking example of a purely Roman reference. The topic of the ode, the quality of kingship, is a theme which could have specific relevance for an audience of Imperial Rome. Steele²¹ has noted various examples in the Thyestes where the play reflects conditions in the life and politics of Seneca's time. The final section of the ode (391-403), besides being a type of traditional, choral escapism, includes elements of thought which can be traced far back in various schools of philosophical study e.g. the Epicurean idea λάθη βιῶσας cf. 391-5.²² The last three lines suggest, perhaps surprisingly after the heavily Roman tone of the previous passage, the famous Socratic maxim γνῶθι σεαυτόν. However, the significant adjectives in lines 402-3, notus and ignotus, link the thought with the expression in line 396 nullis nota Quiritibus, so that the Socratic thought is given a thoroughly Roman context.

The effect of these various levels of reference is to give

the ode a sense of timelessness which suits the idealising of the Chorus. The figure they describe does not exist in the situation of the play, nor in Imperial Rome. He embodies concepts which are totally alien to the morality of kings such as Atreus and totally unrealistic in the Thyestes.

Thyestes has been described by Atreus in Act II as a former criminal capable of further crime, someone not unlike Atreus himself. The second ode has presented an ideal picture of a rex to which Atreus bears no resemblance. When Thyestes finally enters, at the beginning of Act III, he belies Atreus' description of him, thus providing a contrast, but at the same time he fails to meet all the requirements of the Chorus' rex.

He is glad to see his homeland again (404f.) but his fear of Atreus makes him want to leave (412f.). He seems to be well aware of the dangers of high position, complaining about its falsehood (414f. and 446f.). He scorns kingship and refuses the offer of power which Tantalus suggests (441ff.). He even echoes the Chorus' view of true, apolitical kingship in his comment that the highest potestas is nulla, si cupias nihil (443). Thyestes has the potential to be a strong-willed character who could oppose Atreus. But Seneca has not written a play of contrasts in black and white. Thyestes is not strong-willed and this is displayed not only in the dialogue with Tantalus and Atreus but also in his echoes of the Chorus.

Thyestes prefers the humble, obscure life which the Chorus praised (compare lines 412-4 and 449ff. with lines 391ff.). Like the Chorus, he is wary of power. The fulgor which he des-

pises has been described in detail by the Chorus in lines 344ff.. Lines 413-6 are the words of a man who has experienced the treacherous falsity of such a facade. He voices the ideals of Ode II but he does not embody them himself.²³ He knows the treachery in positions of power because he himself has exercised such power. Admittedly this is in the past but there is some evidence in this very first speech that he might welcome a return to such eminence.²⁴ As a returning exile he quite naturally welcomes the sight of his native-land (404ff.). However, there are some echoes of Ode II which put Thyestes' eagerness in a rather more sinister light. The sacras turre (407-8) might recall the Chorus' reference to those who are cupidi arcium (342). His fond memory of popular applause (409-10) and his anticipation of being welcomed by large crowds (cf. 411) can be contrasted with the Chorus' warnings about the numquam stabilis favor/vulgi (351-2).²⁵ It seems that Thyestes possesses those tendencies criticised by the Chorus in Ode II.

His change in mood is brought on by his fear of Atreus (412). The rex, according to the Chorus in line 358, is particularly fearless and would meet his fate gladly. Thyestes, however, is terrified of becoming entangled with Atreus (cf. lines 412, 419-20 and 421-2). In this Act he is afraid of some thing, person or event, of which he is not sure (434). Whatever it is, he is swept along helplessly by some force like a ship in a storm (437-9). Metus is dominant at this point. The Chorus' rex avoided it by avoiding political power.

Thyestes shows himself aware (446-9 and 449-67) that metus is a concomitant of political power (cf. Chorus in Ode III 604-6). The powers at work in this play have their effect on Thyestes just as much as on Atreus. Atreus was likewise seized by a strange power or emotion in Act II, lines 216-2. Thyestes is filled with fear and apprehension and has stated strongly his views on kingship, and yet he is totally deceived by Atreus' effusive welcome. At first he tries to refuse the offer of a throne. But, just as he yielded to Tantalus in line 489, allowing himself to be carried on by events, so he surrenders to Atreus' rather superficial blackmail (538-42).

All the fine precepts he voiced earlier in this scene, the warnings he gave, have done him no good at all. This scene emphasises the fact that a rex such as the one described in Ode II does not and cannot exist in a situation such as the one portrayed in this play. Thyestes may have had the potential to lead a quiet, untroubled life, having learned from past experience and present hardship. But in this scene he falls a ready prey to Atreus' designs. Once exposed to power, Thyestes becomes its victim. The only way to avoid it is to withdraw to the other extreme, as Thyestes did once and the Chorus wished to in Ode II. But Thyestes has been successfully lured back.

Well may the Chorus say, at the end of this Act,

Credat hoc quisquam? (546).

It is Atreus' apparent volte-face, however, which amazes them, not Thyestes' submission. They are astonished that ferus ille et acer should be so overcome with emotion, concluding that it

is pietas (549) which has caused this marvellous event. Pietas can defeat war, and the Chorus go on to describe the state of affairs in Mycenae during civil war (560-72), and the peace which has come like the calm after a sea storm (573-95).

The sudden change in the brothers' relationship and the image of natural change lead the Chorus to contemplation of the vicissitudes of fortune;

Nulla sors longa est; dolor ac voluptas

invicem cedunt; brevior voluptas. (596-7)

So far the Chorus have been concerned primarily with improving situations, war ending and storms abating. But, just as fortune continually rotates (cf. 617-8), so the Chorus' theme, initially joyful, acquires a more sombre note. Man should be ever aware of the levis hora, especially he who wears a crown.²⁶ The man in high position has far to fall and he carries many anxieties (599-606). Kings have privileges which should not be misused (607-10) for they themselves are subject to a greater power;

omne sub regno graviore regnum est (612)

The Chorus plead for moderation (615-6) as the only safe course. The couplet in lines 619-20 reminds us that we cannot even be sure of tomorrow;

nemo tam divos habuit faventes,

crastinum ut posset sibi polliceri.

The initial theme of pietas has interesting links with the preceding Acts. As outsiders the Chorus readily assume that some such feeling has reunited the brothers. However,

pietas was forceably rejected by Atreus in Act II, e.g. in lines 249-50;

Excede, Pietas, si modo in nostra domo
umquam fuisti.

Before listening to his brother's speech of welcome, Thyestes scorned the idea that pietas could exist between himself and Atreus (476ff.). But after hearing Atreus' speech with its promise of pietas (510) in their future relationship, Thyestes can say to Atreus,

pessimam causam meam

hodierna pietas fecit. (514-5)

This is the theme which the Chorus take up first. They are as much deceived by Atreus' show as Thyestes is.

However, within the ode the Chorus have time to consider matters. The development of some ideas or images can lead to a contrasting mood. Such a change occurs during the long simile of the sea-storm.²⁷ The description of a calm sea after a storm readily suggests the thought that the sea will not remain calm for very long. Since the sea is being used as a parallel for human events, that thought easily leads into the Chorus' next theme concerning the changeability of human fortune. Thus the sequence of thought is a natural one, though not made explicit.

As in the previous odes, so here Seneca achieves the same type of ironic contrast between Act and ode. The irony is created by the different levels of knowledge involved. The knowledge of the Chorus here and throughout the play is restricted to suit the point in the play where each ode occurs,

while the audience, guided by the dramatist, knows the whole, true situation. Dewey²⁸ has described the Chorus in Ode III as "an audience within the play for the benefit of the audience watching", so that the audience can anticipate the disaster while the Chorus give their personal reaction to recent events. The reaction of the Chorus to Act III is natural in view of their limited knowledge. The audience, however, which knows the true motives behind Atreus' promise of line 510, can see a further level of meaning in,

Nulla sors longa est ... (596)

and the general theme of the dangers of kingship. With its wider knowledge the audience can fully appreciate the irony of the question quis deus (561). The situation was similarly ironic in Ode II where the Chorus asked Quis ... furor (339). They do not have Atreus in mind when they give warning to

ille qui donat diadema fronti, (599)

but the audience can detect here an apt reference not only to Atreus but also to Thyestes. The injunction in lines 607ff. could easily apply to Atreus for whom the inflatos tumidosque vultus would be very suitable.

The Chorus state that those who abuse their royal power, which is a divine gift, will be punished (607-12, cf. Ode I 149-51 for a similar idea). They refer to a rector maris atque terrae (607), which suggests the influence of some external power on human affairs. In Ode I 122ff. they appealed to a deity for intervention, but I have indicated that such a deity does not exist. Similarly, in Ode III, there is no evidence

for a protective deity. The rector, whoever he is, is overshadowed by the references to Clotho and Fortuna (617-8).

The Chorus' last words, describing a deus, are better applied to the Fury of the Prologue;

res deus nostras celeri citatas

turbine versat. (621-2)

The careful antitheses of lines 610-6²⁹ reflect the topsy-turvy nature of the world within the play, a world dominated by chance.

In contrast to the rest of the ode, these last lines, from line 596 onwards, indicate an underlying apprehension which is substantiated by the Messenger's news.³⁰ The Chorus are not aware that the warning in line 615 should apply directly to themselves,

Nemo confidat nimium secundis.

At the beginning of this ode, they were overjoyed at the apparent reconciliation between Atreus and Thyestes. Such a reaction is, I believe, clearly suggested by the expressive lines devoted to the topic of pietas (549-59). However, the two elements of irony, which are created by their misunderstanding of the situation and by their unconsciously accurate observations at the end of the ode, detract from and cancel the initial joy (cf. the irony and futility of the prayer in Ode I). The transformation to a pessimistic anticipation is affirmed by the deliberate verbal connection between lines 622 and 623. The Chorus describe man's destiny as being kept in constant turmoil by a celeri turbine. It is by just such a turbo that the Messenger is swept on stage, and he brings the news of

disaster.

In the fourth Act the details of Atreus' crime are narrated by the distraught Messenger to an anxious and shocked Chorus. The terrifying nature of the news is borne out by the Messenger's physical and mental reactions (623, 627 and 634ff.). By way of setting the scene for the horrors to come, the Messenger describes the palace and grove at Mycenae (641ff.). It is indeed a fitting place for Atreus to commit his heinous crimes. Then the careful preparations, religiously scrupulous, are noted and the actual murders described (691ff. and 720-843). The climax to the horror comes as the Messenger relates how Atreus avidly cut up the corpses for the diabolical feast (749ff.). He suggests that the sun has left the heavens (776ff. and 784ff.), perhaps in an attempt to conceal the vile events (cf. 786ff.).

In this Act the Chorus perform the task of eliciting information about events which would have taken place off-stage in an actual performance. This is a function which the Chorus have fulfilled since the times of Greek tragedy³¹ (cf. Seneca's Tro. 166ff. and Med. 881ff.). In the Thyestes, however, the Chorus' role is more extensive than in either of these examples from the genuine, Senecan tragedies. This is due to the importance of the effect the news has on the Chorus. Their reaction is,

An ultra maius aut atrocius.

natura recipit?

(745-6)

Up to this point in the play the Chorus have shown little

awareness of the evil surrounding them. From Ode I onwards they have tried to maintain the view that crime has reached an end. Ode II indicates only that they are aware of their monarchy's past evil; they do not know of Atreus' new plans. At the beginning of Ode III, they are deceived by and welcome his change of heart. It is in Act IV that the Chorus realise fully that evil, beyond their conception of it, flourishes still in the House of Pelops. This realisation deprives them of any basis, however tenuous, for their previous beliefs and expectations.

Act IV has strong thematic links with the following ode concerning darkness and the disappearance of the sun. When the Messenger enters, it seems that he may be talking figuratively about atra ... nube and turbo (623 and 624).³² The theme of darkness is developed in the scene (e.g. in the description of the palace grove in lines 665-78) and it soon changes from a verbal theme to a reality. In lines 637-8, the Messenger appeals to the storm winds to carry him off,

... quo fertur dies

hinc raptus.

In line 776, he cries out to Phoebus who, though he has retreated from the sky, has still set too late to prevent the horror from taking place. By the end of this Act, the atra ... nube has become a very strange and very real

nox missa ab ortu tempore alieno gravis (787).

Ode IV comes as a climax to this Act, and to all the previous references to, and predictions of, phenomena in heaven.

and on earth.³³ The Messenger mentioned the eclipse of the sun as having already occurred, but the Chorus describe it as if it were just happening;

Quo terrarum superumque parens
 cuius ad ortus noctis opacae
 decus omne fugit, quo vertis iter
 medioque diem perdis Olympo?
 cur, Phoebe, tuos rapis aspectus? (789-93)

It is not necessary to suppose from this that there are several eclipses in the play as Owen proposes.³⁴ We are presented, in fact, with several reactions to the one eclipse, those of the Messenger and Chorus already noted and of Atreus (891ff.) and Thyestes (990-5).

It may be thought that there is a discrepancy between the Chorus' knowledge of the eclipse in Act IV and in the ensuing ode. The Messenger's words suggest a motive for the eclipse in lines 782ff. but the Chorus show no awareness of this. The fact is that the Messenger makes no explicit connection between the eclipse and evil.³⁵ The audience can draw this conclusion but the Chorus does not. They concentrate instead on the possible holocaust to come. The eclipse symbolises for them the complete ruin of natural order, the order on which their prayer was based in Ode I.

In this fourth ode the Chorus give lyric expression to the fears, horror and disillusionment which have now reached their peak. The ode provides the perfect means of describing the eclipse in emotional and more poetic terms. As Dewey

suggests, "it is the chorus which 'creates' the night" (p.274 note 2) for, without this ode, we would not have a proper description of the phenomenon and its attendant horror. In the ode, the Chorus expand upon the theme of the eclipse and visualise a return to total chaos, and a destruction also of themselves to which they are resigned.

The opening lines of the ode display the Chorus' bewilderment. They do not understand why Phoebus should hide his face (789ff.). It is not yet time for night to come (794ff.). The repetition of nondum in lines 794-801 reinforces the untimeliness of this darkness. The Chorus picture for the audience the amazement of the ploughman whose oxen are unwearied when it seems to be time for the evening meal (798-801). The Chorus, here, can visualise the 'normal' world gone wrong in view of what they have learned and are witnessing whereas, in Ode I, they presented the phenomena of a 'normal' world-order although this had already been overturned in Act I. The Chorus pose questions and seek answers from the past. Perhaps the gates of Hell have been opened and the Giants are trying to renew their war (804ff.). Whatever the cause of this disturbance, the conclusion is the same;

solitae mundi periere vices,

nihil occasus, nihil ortus erit. (813-4)³⁶

The Chorus realise that the world of natural order and normality no longer exists. Confusion reigns in the heavens and Aurora who usually helps to direct the passage of time finds herself unable to cope with this new, strange situation (815-23). The emphasis falls on words such as perversa, nescit,

insueto and nondum ... parata.³⁷ Darkness has come before its due time and there are no stars or moon to separate the clouds (824-6). This expression is very close to the Fury's in line 49, cur micant stellae polo, and marks the fulfilment of the curse.

The Chorus do not fully understand what is happening but are swept along in an emotional cataclysm. They wish it really was night - that would be a sign of order, of normality. But this is a despairing wish. They are dreadfully afraid that this eclipse heralds the return of deforme chaos (830). They imagine what would happen, the absence of stars, sun and moon which mark the passage of time (835ff.). Looking into the future, they see the destruction of all the signs of the Zodiac (844-74). All this suggests to the Chorus the end of the world. In the final section of the ode (875-884) they consider themselves;

Nos e tanto visi populo
 digni premeret quos everso
 cardine mundus? in nos aetas
 ultima venit? (875-8)

They lament man's harsh fate which they are now experiencing; they are now personally involved. The audience can infer from Act IV that Atreus' action drove away the sun, but the Chorus see that the responsibility, the guilt, may have a wider application,

..... seu perdidimus
 solem miseri, sive expulimus! (879-81)

The Chorus has universalised the idea of crime, as it were, for they do not refer just to Atreus or the House of Pelops or even humanity in general, but they include themselves as a part of mankind who have offended the gods. It is a far cry from their closing wish at Ode II to lead a quiet, untroubled life removed from sources of danger. Now they are facing a destruction, for which they are in no way responsible but to which they resign themselves with dignity. They dismiss the fears that have been assailing them and prepare to meet the final ruin with all the fortitude of a rex such as Ode II portrayed;

abeant questus, discede timor;
 vitae est avidus quisquis non vult
 mundo secum pereunte mori. (882-4)

There could not be a greater contrast to the Chorus' terror and final resignation than the triumphant announcement of Atreus,

Aequalis astris gradior et cunctos super
 altum superbo vertice attingens polum. (885-6)³⁸

Again there is an immediate verbal and thematic link between ode and Act. The Chorus have just described the fall of all the stars, but Atreus sees himself elevated to the lofty position of these same stars. He has conquered all and has, at last, reached his position of "superhuman" power. It will be seen that, throughout this final Act, constant references are made to the phenomena described by the Chorus and to the theme of chaos.

This final Act shows Atreus glorifying in his excesses

and revelling in taunting Thyestes mercilessly with such ironic statements as,

Hic esse natos crede in amplexu patris (976)

He baits Thyestes in this fashion until the final revelation in line 1034. In this way Atreus achieves the fructus of his efforts,

... fructus hic operis mei est.

miserum videre nolo, sed dum fit miser. (906-7)

The scene is one of protracted agony for Thyestes. In his canticum he fluctuates between drunken happiness and anxiety (920ff.). Just as in Act III, Thyestes evinced a rather groundless confidence in having learned from the past (cf. line 414ff. and 446ff.) and ignored premonitions of disaster (cf. lines 434-5), so in this final monologue he indicates that he, as one of the miseri (938) and afflicti (941), has learned,

numquam rebus credere laetis (939)

and yet he does not realise that he has allowed himself to fall into this very trap. At the close of this speech, he asks,

an habet lacrimas

magna voluptas? (968-9).

His question echoes the Chorus' reflection in Ode III 596ff.³⁹ that dolor and voluptas swiftly alternate. For Thyestes the moment of apparent happiness does bring tears.

There are several thematic links with Ode IV. The Act continues with references to the gods and the eclipse, emphasising the complete disruption of natural order. Atreus' rise to the stature of a god has already been indicated (885ff.).

Here, he is cunctos super, perhaps even more like some "Jupiter" than in Act II 290ff. In this final Act it is he who dispenses justice and awards the punishment (1112). His royal power is not only secured (887); it is increased,

..... o me caelitum excelsissimum,
regum atque regem! (911-12).

He is pleased that the gods have fled along with the daylight, but wishes he could force them to stay and watch (891ff.). Even in his moment of success (889) he still feels some dissatisfaction; sed cur satis sit? (890). His crime could possibly have been improved (cf. 1065ff.). Atreus is as concerned here as he was in Act II with achieving satisfaction. Not only does he seek it for himself; he expresses an intention to satisfy Thyestes also. He does this by means of food and wine (913 cf. 919 and 973) and by professing to allay Thyestes' anxieties about his sons (980). The irony is, of course, that the food and wine are his sons (cf. 982ff.). The desire to be fully satisfied has led Atreus to acts of criminal excess.

The eclipse is recalled by Atreus (890-2) and by Thyestes (990ff.). When Atreus presents Thyestes with the heads of his sons (1004-5), Thyestes cries out in horror sustines / Tellus (1006-7). He asks whether the world will not sink ad chaos because of such evil. Chaos was pictured by the Chorus in Ode IV; but this time, much to Thyestes' consternation, no supernatural phenomena occur (1020). The gods have fled (1021). It is not until Thyestes realises the full extent of Atreus' crime that he understands also the absence of the gods (1035-6). Ironically, he calls upon the summe caeli rector (1077) to

wreak terrible destruction upon the earth.⁴⁰ This is the same rector to whom the Chorus referred in Ode III 607ff., the maior dominus who would punish transgressors (611-12). But the ordered universe is being destroyed. For the Chorus it is already dead. There is no god to avenge or punish, a fact which lends a pathetic irony to Thyestes' words,

Vindices aderunt dei (1110).

Dewey, noting Thyestes' vain appeal, comments on "the indifference of the gods to justice and to the preservation of the human moral order" which is a feature of Senecan tragedy (p.282). However, I think that, by the end of this play, with the complete victory and assurance of Atreus, the helplessness of Thyestes and the total refutation of the Chorus' statements, one may be closer to the truth in saying that no such gods of justice and order exist here. The story of the House of Pelops provides us with the chain of crime and revenge where retribution does eventually take place.⁴¹ But Seneca's Thyestes does not, in its final scene, convince us that Thyestes will eventually have his revenge.

Thyestes' hope (1110) is a vain one. This last Act has seen the complete fulfilment of the Fury's predictions in Act I. We began with the figure of Tantalus paying eternally for his crime in kind, and at the end of the play Atreus places Thyestes in the same role. Tantalus was punished with his greed - Thyestes will be punished by the sons against whom he committed his crime. It is almost a travesty of the Chorus' conclusion in Ode I, lines 150-1,

.... nec dapibus feris
decerni potuit poena decentior.

This study of the dramatic function of the choral odes in the Thyestes has shown that each of the odes is linked definitely and deliberately with the preceding and following action. The odes are not stereotyped. In the first three odes, the Chorus are ignorant of the events in the play, while, in Ode IV, they are very much aware of them. As a result of this misunderstanding, the tone of the odes is thoroughly ironic. Indeed, irony, on various levels, is a strong characteristic of these three odes. Ode IV, however, differs, for the Chorus are fully cognizant and the ode, therefore, is not ironic. The only element which might be regarded as ironic is the Chorus' brave acceptance of death, in which they approach their idealised rex of Ode II.

The Character of the Chorus in the Thyestes is not entirely clear. The only indication of a persona occurs in Ode II line 400. The description of the civil strife in Ode III suggests that they are Myceneans who experienced this period of trouble (cf. also the prayer in Ode I). They would be old men as this would suit their contemplative tone in Ode II 391ff. and their constant hope for future peace (Ode I 132ff. and Ode III). Seneca, however, is not concerned with characterising his Choruses in the manner of a Greek tragedian. The content of each ode seems to be chosen for its contribution to the action of the play, not for its elucidation of the Chorus' character. However, while stating that Seneca has not given his Chorus a

complete persona, I would not agree that the Chorus, as exemplified in the Thyestes, is totally impersonal. The Chorus do not say exactly who they are, but some impression is surely given of who they are likely to be. It has been shown that the odes are not absolutely devoid of information as to the Chorus' identity. The tone or atmosphere created by the sentiments of the odes also gives some indication of it. The odes present certain views, attitudes and reactions to the events and themes of the play. They display sentiments which often contradict the actions or words of the main characters. Where the dramatic action is black and despairing, the choral ode suggests comparatively brighter possibilities (e.g. Odes I, II and III). At the same time each ode, often by means of some ironic contrast, can develop the theme of evil fortune and ruin (e.g. Ode II the contrast between Atreus and the rex, Ode III the sea-image 577ff. and Ode IV).

The choral odes show the other side of the coin, as it were, and also point to the important themes which run through the play. The thematic links provided by the odes give the play a firm structure, a unity and also a feeling of continuity of action. Without the odes the play would lose much of its significance. It would indeed appear as a melodrama, the unrolling of a morbid tale of vengeance. The odes, however, while highlighting the themes of the play and the qualities of the characters, also add complexities to them. The contents of Odes I-III show Seneca to be a master in creating ironic contrasts. The odes combine to increase the interest and

effectiveness of the play, making the Thyestes an excellent example of Senecan drama.

CHAPTER II

POETIC ASPECTS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine each of the four odes in the Thyestes to assess their poetic quality. This will be done by examining Seneca's handling of metre, language and various rhetorical devices (PART I). There will also be a shorter, concluding section on some selected parallel passages from the poems of Horace¹ and Virgil (PART II). There already exist authoritative compilations of Horatian passages, but I feel that they tend to be lacking in critical assessment of how Seneca has used and adapted such material. It is possible to detect reminiscences of other Roman poets, but to account for all would require a lengthier discussion than the range of this chapter permits.

PART I

Senecan odes do not display the strophic structure and metrical responsion which characterise the odes of Greek tragedy. Each ode is generally written in one metre although several odes have a variety of metres and sometimes are composed in a particular form. The third ode of the Phaedra, for example, is written in asclepiads and sapphics and Ode II of the Medea has a stanzaic form.² Each of the odes of the Thyestes, however, is written in one metre, the only divergence from the pattern being the final line of Ode III which

is adonic, not sapphic. The metres are as follows:- Ode I asclepiads; Ode II glyconics; Ode III sapphics plus one adonic and Ode IV anapaests.

What reasons, if any, could Seneca have had for writing an ode in a particular metre? Bishop³ addresses this question in a recent article, his thesis being that a certain metre has a relation to a particular theme or attitude of thought, that Seneca is practising a form of ethopoesis.⁴ He places the odes into five metrical categories, asclepiads, glyconics, sapphics, anapaests and polymetric odes. Each of these categories is characterised by a certain theme or themes, which he has tabulated on pp.199-209. Bishop examines the whole tragic corpus of Seneca, but here I am concerned mainly with his arguments in relation to the Thyestes.

Ode IV of the Thyestes is written in anapaestic dimeters. It is classified by Bishop as an ode of disaster, which is obviously correct. However, his category for the anapaestic metres also includes themes of lamentation (e.g. Tr. I and Ag. III) and changes of fortune (e.g. Ag. I and Phaed. III). In each case Bishop is basically correct. The category of lamentation is a particularly clear-cut one. But, as with the rest of his argument, one can find loopholes. The theme of Fortuna is equally strong in Ode III of Thyestes which is a sapphic ode. In this ode, the Chorus, after the contrast of war and peace (lines 560-95), concentrate on the levis hora (596ff.). This is just one example of the problems involved in trying to restrict a certain metre to a certain theme or themes.

There are invariably exceptions to the rule which need consideration.

The sapphic odes are categorised as portraying the effects of some external force in man or a situation.⁵ Bishop classifies Ode III of the Thyestes as sapphic with the label vices vitae, which is indeed the main theme of the ode. However, Bishop seems to make an unnecessarily strong personification of amor (cf. 551). He notes the theme of fortune (p.205), but, in his conclusion to the sapphics, he does not name fortune as an external deity, writing instead "Amor or some other deity". It is surely fate or fortune that should be so designated but this theme has already been given by Bishop to the anapaests.⁶

In Bishop's view the use of glyconics indicates the theme of praise and thus Ode II of the Thyestes "is an encomium of the true king ..." (p.206). Basically Bishop is probably correct in saying that all the examples of glyconics contain an element of praise. In this way he includes more of the glyconic odes than Marx did with his categorisation of them as "philosophica".⁷ In some cases, Bishop's interpretation is more suitable as when he notes the important contrast of sapphics and glyconics in H.F. III. But in Thyestes Ode II, and Oed. IV,⁸ it is clear that there is a marked philosophical element. These two odes do convey a "message". Daedalus, in Oed. IV, is not just an object of praise; he is an exemplum of the callidus senex who followed the medium iter. The glyconic sections in H.F. III and Med. I do provide a contrast to the rest of these odes, each containing an element of

praise and celebration. However, it is debatable whether the glyconics in Med. I are really much happier than the remainder of the ode. Bishop does not go into detail on this subject of the contrast in mood suggested by the change of metre in such odes. In H.F. III, for example, the lighter glyconics emphasise the stark gloominess of tibi, Mors, paramur (872) which has just preceded them.

There remain the asclepiad odes which, according to Bishop, depict "the powers, the spheres of operation of divine beings, and the practices due to them". Ode I of the Thyestes fits into this category with the Chorus' initial prayer for future peace and their description of Tantalus' punishment which was meted out by the gods. However, the theme of the gods and "practices due to them" occurs with varying degrees of prominence. It is difficult to see clearly in Tr. II where this theme fits in. In Thy. I the Chorus address unnamed gods in vain. The gods figure in this ode only to show how much they are lacking from the rest of the play. Much of the ode is taken up with the description⁹ of Tantalus' punishment, a passage which is important not only for its poetic expression but also for its relevance to the dramatic theme of the futile opposition to evil.

Bishop has certainly expanded the rather narrow view of Marx who omitted many odes from his classifications including the polymetric odes. However, his own theory also has inadequacies. His categories are wider than Marx's in order to accommodate more of the available material. However, there is

a danger of categories becoming so wide that there is an overlapping of themes between different metres. Some examples of this have already been suggested.¹⁰

Bishop does not show convincingly that there is a close relationship between theme and metre in Seneca's choral odes. His theory certainly shows weaknesses when applied to the Thyestes. He picks the primary theme of an ode arbitrarily, neglecting the important developments which occur, for example, in Thy. III. Bishop offers no explanation of why a certain metre should portray a certain topic, nor does his argument include any discussion of the historical associations of the metres, an important omission in an article concerned wholly with metre. He has noted some instances where the metre is changed (e.g. H.F. III) and also the theme. However, he does not explain why, in other cases, the theme changes but the metre is unaltered. Thy. III, for example, from line 596 onwards (or even from line 560) has an "anapaestic" theme according to Bishop's discussion of anapaests. In conclusion, I would say that Bishop's theory of ethopoesis has little relevance for the odes of the Thyestes.

Seneca's handling of metre has received much adverse criticism for being monotonous. Costa¹¹ describes the metres as "boring", and remarks on Seneca's "insensitivity" (p.107). Mendell¹² takes a rather cursory glance at Seneca's use of metre and expresses dissatisfaction with it (pp.135-6). In comparison with the lyric metres of Greek tragedy and of Latin poets such as Catullus and Horace, the metres of Seneca's odes

show little variety. In the Thyestes each ode is composed in one metre whose stichic structure seems to emphasise the monotony of the rhythm. This criticism is the obvious, first impression of the odes. However, one should consider them more carefully than this before maligning Seneca as a poet. The following study of the odes is intended to show that, in the odes of the Thyestes, the structure and language (e.g. word-order and rhetorical tropes) provide elements which compensate for the metrical monotony. It will indicate also that the repetitive nature of individual metres can be exploited at times. The examination of language and metre which follows is not intended to be exhaustive as this would entail a more extensive study, beyond the range of this thesis.

The first ode of the Thyestes is composed in regular asclepiads, the lesser asclepiad since each line contains two choriamb. Throughout the ode there is a break between these choriamb so that both halves of a line contain an equal number of syllables. In no line does a word span this gap between the two choriamb.¹³ Such a structure can, indeed, lead to a very monotonous rhythm; but there are some metrical points in Ode I which, in my opinion, are worth noting since they exhibit methods whereby the asclepiad rhythm is altered. In the majority of the lines the grammatical sense is unbroken (e.g. 122-30) but in several instances there is a strong pause at the caesura (138, 139, 150, 165-7 and 171-2). In just two cases, lines 131 and 158, there is a marked break before the

caesura, creating a molossus in Alpheos and a single emphatic long in haec. A strong pause in the grammar occurs after the caesura in lines 140, 142, 147 and 174 and the rhythm of the second choriamb (with the final iambus) becomes - u u / - u -. However, although these disruptions conflict noticeably with the standard caesura (after the sixth syllable), the alteration in the rhythm does not seem to be calculated to produce any special effect. In the ode there are thirty lines whose last word forms a cretic (e.g. 125 and 141-7), without there being any break in the sense of the line. There is only one instance where one might detect some significance, in the final word pulverem in line 175,

altum de rapido gurgite pulverem.

Here metre combines with the sense of the words to leave one poised on the final short of gurgite before the dramatic last word. A single example, however, does not prove that Seneca was particularly conscious of final cretics. This type of ending is common in the asclepiad odes of Horace, e.g. C. I.1, III.30 and IV.8 (cf. also C. I.19, III.24 and 25). Horace does not generally seem to attach a special importance to it.

Equally common in Ode I is the coupling of a single trisyllabic word with the three initial long beats of the line (e.g. 131-3, 138 and 163-4). This combination occurs also in the Horatian odes already cited. It is noticeable that in the last section of the ode (152-75) these initial long syllables are formed often by a verb. In the twenty-four lines of this section fourteen begin with a verb or a part of a verb

(cf. H.F. 141, 144, 146 and 148) which relates to Tantalus' temptation and vain resistance, e.g. impendet (153), alludit (157) insultant (164), exarsit (171) and avertit (173).

Placed in a prominent and significant position at the beginning of a line, the verbs are further emphasised by the three long beats. Even if the placing of the verbs were dictated to some extent by metrical requirements, I do not think that Seneca would have been unaware of the advantageous results. The repetition of this heavy rhythm has the effect of a hammering out of the struggle taking place in Tantalus, a struggle which can only end in submission. It was noted in the previous chapter that the importance of this passage lay in its themes, Tantalus' exertions and his final failure. The words which illustrate these themes are stressed not only by their position, but also by the repeated metrical rhythm. The monotony of the asclepiads in the final part of the ode does therefore have some advantages.

The sameness of the metre from one line to the next is particularly noteworthy in the parallel couplets for which Seneca shows a great liking. There is only one example of this parallelism in Ode I;

hos aeterna fames persequitur cibos,
 hos aeterna sitis; nec dapibus feris
 decerni potuit poena decentior. (149-51)

The lines incorporate several devices at a point where the Chorus are saying something of particular dramatic relevance. Lines 149-50 highlight the ideas of hunger and thirst which

are Tantalus' punishment and which also appear figuratively as a tormenting appetite in Atreus. Line 151 neatly finishes off the Chorus' three-line statement on crime and punishment. There is a very deliberate placing of words and use of alliteration, the words being arranged so that the repetition of "d" and "p" (cf. also dapibus 150) falls into the pattern 1 / 2 / 2 / 1. (Compare line 135 with the alliteration of "m" and "p" and the word-play in the position of maior and minori-bus.) There may be a deliberate echo between the strategically placed decerni and decentior. This line provides a conclusion to the preceding part of the ode before the description of Tantalus. Similarly line 175, with its particular metrical rhythm added to the sense, literal and symbolic, provides a neat conclusion to the ode.

There are further features of language which also add interest to the ode. For example, the description of Taygetus and the winds which lay down and remove the snows (126ff.) is marked by a number of sibilant "s" sounds. Line 129, combining the suggestive adjective veliferis with the first choriamb, succeeds in conveying the gentler rise and fall of the Etesian winds. In lines 130 and 164 Seneca makes full use of the liquid "l"'s and the long "lu" syllables in gelido flumine lucidus and insultant foliis mitia languidis. The latter suggests both the richness and the irresistible force of the fruit trees which lower their branches so enticingly.

The last section, the description of Tantalus, contains an accumulation of fine combinations of language, sound and

rhythm. Some of these have already been noted. The opening line, enhanced by the pattern of "a"'s sets the scene;

Stat lassus¹⁴ vacuo gutture Tantalus. (152)

Tantalus stands unable to find rest, exhausted and empty after his futile efforts to appease his thirst and hunger. In the next few lines Seneca shows his ability to select the words best suited to his purpose. He emphasises the abundance of food beyond Tantalus' grasp, e.g. the verbs impendet, incubat, curvata ... tremens and other terms, such as plurima, gravidis and divitias. The futility of his efforts is likewise stressed, e.g. praeda fugacior, alludit patulis ... hiatibus and iubet / irritas exercere manus. The phrase totus ... autumnus (167-8) is also very striking. Coming at the end of the description of the fruits, these words form a fitting climax. The fertile abundance is like some huge harvest which will never in fact be reaped.

The second ode of the Thyestes is composed of glyconics which form a quick moving rhythm. Its quickness and lightness make it a suitable metre for songs of praise or wedding hymns (cf. Bishop p.206). A survey of the traditional themes of glyconics has been carried out by J.W. Loomis¹⁵ who points out that this metre, specifically in Greek lyric and in Catullus (with some references also to Plautus, Horace and Seneca), is linked with cult songs, paeans and marriage hymns. Some of the content of Ode II of the Thyestes, however, is closer to Marx's description of it as "philosophica" (cf. Bishop p.217).

There are, in fact, both elements in the ode, praise and philosophy.

In this ode the metrical line is short and it forms a good vehicle for concise, forceful statements, e.g. lines 348-9, 380, 390 and 393. However, if the ode consisted only or mostly of such brief expressions, the resulting effect would be rather monotonous. Such a result was avoided by Catullus who composed his glyconics in stanzaic form, closing a series with a pherecratean (e.g. poems 34 and 61). Senecan glyconics, however, are written in a stichic structure without any variety in the rhythm, which, as in Ode I, tends to be monotonous. This monotony is, I believe, counterbalanced to some extent by the careful structuring of the ode, which is visible in the sentence construction and the effective use of repetition and anaphora.

The brief statement in lines 348-9 introduces the long passage from line 349 to 368 describing the character and qualities of the true rex. These lines form virtually one statement, comprising several relative clauses. The passage is prevented from being loose or rambling by a tight internal structure. There are five parallel relative clauses in sequence, of which the three central ones all begin quem non (350, 358 and 363). These define the rex in negative terms, stating what does not affect him, while the two framing clauses in lines 348 and 365, beginning with qui, define the rex positively. These latter clauses produce a type of ring-composition. The idea of fearlessness in line 348 is repeated in lines 358ff. in the words non concutiet and in the climactic

statement that this rex meets death without complaint.

On a wider scale this well-balanced structure can be found in the whole ode. The section on kingship, the longest part of the ode, is marked off at the beginning by the shorter statements in lines 336-43 and at its conclusion by lines 388-90. There is again a neat application of ring-composition, with line 388 clearly recalling line 348. Lines 388-90 form a three-line, epigrammatic summary which rounds off the section on kingship. After the expanded enumeration of riches, sources of fear and foreign powers (344-97), these lines remind us succinctly,

regnum quo iaceat loco. (343 cf. 380)

By way of contrast, the final part of the ode consists of short statements (391-403). The longest single element is only four lines (394-7). The change in theme, from kingship to a life of solitude, is reflected in this alteration in structure. The lines indicate a simpler, starker tone and, perhaps, the limited aims expressed by them.

Anaphora¹⁶ plays a particularly effective role in this ode, in forming expressive lines and in emphasising the structure from line 345 onwards as noted above. It is a trope which appears frequently in the prose works of Seneca and of other writers, but it is equally common in poetry. Repeated negatives are prominent in the ode, e.g. lines 345-7 non vestis .../ non frontis .../ non auro., an example of anaphora, and also in lines 350-64. A series of such statements is often termed a negative preamble (which is not always strictly

anaphora) and examples can be found also in the works of Horace and Catullus. An example in a moralising context similar to that of Ode II occurs in Horace, C. II.18.1ff. non ebur neque aureum // non trabes ... // ... neque Attali / ... regiam... and C. III.3.2ff. non civium ardor ... / non voltus instantis tyranni.¹⁷ Catullus in poem 58b has four emphatic negatives (1-4, cf. also poem 64.39-41 and 63-65; these are examples of anaphora).¹⁸ Seneca uses this negative preamble in the same way as his predecessors for forceful expression; but his examples are particularly effective for their highlighting of a theme which has considerable relevance to the play. It is important for the audience of the Thyestes to learn what the true king is not, for it is a "false" king which they see portrayed in Atreus and Thyestes. These types of negative statement form one of Seneca's most powerful means of dramatic expression (cf. also H.F. 550-3 and 698-700).

It is in the parallel couplets, as was noted in Ode I 149-50, that anaphora is used with the greatest effect. The trope is particularly noteworthy in Ode II 388-9;

rex est qui metuit nihil,

rex est qui cupiet nihil.

This is the only example in the odes of the Thyestes of such exact repetition. Ovid also shows an inclination to use parallel couplets (e.g. Met. I 194-5, 481-2; XIII 827-8) but he does not maintain the precise symmetry in language and metre which is characteristic of the Senecan couplets. One should note also the couplets in Ode III 610-11, 613-4 and 615-6,

which are good examples of Seneca's antithetical style of composition. In such lines the similarity of the metre from line to line is advantageous, for it serves to underline the parallelism and the antithesis. The anaphora in these lines is minimal (e.g. vobis 610-11, dies vidit 613-14 and nemo 615-16), but the precision of their structure is similar to that of lines 388-9 in Ode II. Lines 613-14 contain a very exact form of antithesis which, I believe, is particularly worth noting.

quem dies vidit veniens superbum,
hunc dies vidit fugiens iacentem.

In the first half (up to vidit) the lines are parallel while they contrast in the last pair of words. The use of repetition, parallelism and antithesis stresses and clarifies the important points, such as the nature of the true king and the changeability of fortune.

The transition to the final, more personal and lyrical passage of Ode II is marked by the emphatic, monosyllabic Stet at the beginning of line 391 (cf. Ode I 152 and 171). The following lines exhibit Seneca's ability to create beautiful sounds and rhythms which are very suggestive of peace and repose. Lines 392-400 contain an excellent sequence of long "u" syllables and liquid "l"'s,

aulae culmine lubrico:
me dulcis saturet quies;
obscuro positus loco
leni perfruar otio,

nullis nota Quiritibus
 aetas per tacitum fluat.
 sic cum transierint mei
 nullo cum strepitu dies,
 plebeius moriar senex.

Certain words in the passage (390ff.) gain advantage from their position at the beginning of the line, where they are emphasised by the long beats of the metre, e.g. obscuro, nullis nota, plebeius and ignotus. Their position is due partly to the requirements of the metre; but it is worth noting, for these words are dramatically significant. They stress the Chorus' picture of retirement, obscurity and peace which contrasts so much with the portrayal of Atreus.

The final thought contained in lines 402-3,

qui, notus nimis omnibus,
 ignotus moritur sibi.

features a rhetorical device which may be classed as an example of paronomasia (fully discussed by Canter pp.160ff.). Here it is used with the words notus and ignotus. The similarity of form between the two is used as a means of indicating their contrasting senses. Paronomasia can take various forms, as the repetition of the same word in different cases or of words which are etymologically connected or related in some other way. It can stress a contrast as in Ode II 402f. or a similarity as in Ode IV 836-7 dux ... / ... ducens. In Ode IV there are some striking examples of paronomasia in the repetition of a verb in different forms, e.g. lines 856-8 and in the

fine-sounding line 847,

lapsa videbit sidera labens.

The repeated verb occupies strategic positions at the beginning and end of the line, which is enhanced by the alliteration of "l" and "s". In Ode IV the downfall of the stars forms the main theme which is accentuated by this method of repeating the idea of falling. Such figures of speech as anaphora and paronomasia are essential to the expression of poetic and dramatic themes in Senecan drama.

An element in Ode II which has earned Seneca much adverse criticism is the accumulation of epithets and the geographical references.¹⁹ However, mentioning foreign places and peoples is a traditional feature in ancient poetry from Homer to Roman times and such references are not without poetic effect.²⁰ In the descriptive passage (354-73) the adjectival phrases are carefully placed, framing a word with which they are closely linked. An example occurs in lines 354-5;

aut unda Tagus aurea

claro devehit alveo.

It is the unda ... aurea which indicates the wealth of the river Tagus and it is in the claro ... alveo that this wealth is conveyed. In this example, as in others (e.g. 371-3), the epithets are not otiose.

In connection with the glyconics of Ode II it was noted that Seneca could use the short line of eight syllables to form brief moral statements or he could exploit the stichic

structure of the lines to give continuous, expansive descriptions. Much the same construction is evident in the sapphics in Ode III, a metre containing eleven syllables. Within the short line there is a good basis for the terse expressions which Seneca creates so skilfully, e.g. lines 549, 472 and 598. In the descriptive passages, however, the sense can flow with the metre from line to line, e.g. 552-9 (ira and Pietas), 562-76 (war and peace) and 577-95 (storm and calm). With such a metrical basis, the sentences of the ode are so structured that each descriptive passage is preceded by a brief statement or question which is subsequently explained or expanded. Thus there is the three-line sententia on true piety or affection (549-51) which is imaginatively expanded in lines 552-9 and the long passage on the Mycenaean war is an expansion of the question in lines 560-1. There is a clear structural distinction between the purely descriptive and the more moralistic passages. In this way the ironic sententiae regarding vera pietas (cf. 549) and sors (596), which have specific relevance to the dramatic action, are easily discernible.

The metre is sapphic throughout, except for the final line (622), which is adonic. This is the only example in the genuine tragedies where an adonius is used to conclude an ode.²¹ The line provides a very definite close to the uninterrupted series of sapphics. The sudden change in metrical rhythm throws into relief the words turbine versat and the idea that some force keeps man's affairs in constant turmoil (621-2). In the previous chapter (p.29) the dramatic importance of the

thematic link between ode and Act here was noted; the Messenger enters swept along by just such a turbo as the Chorus have described. This is an important moment in the play. It is during the scene with the Messenger that the Chorus learn the awful truth. This last section of the ode marks a half-way point, as it were, between the Chorus' speculation and their realisation of the truth. The suspense is underlined by the repetition of the word turbo and by the emphatic metrical change.

Descriptive passages which indicate Seneca's ability as a poet are prominent in this ode. The personification of ira (552ff.) is strikingly similar to the passage in Seneca's De Ira I.1.1, "Hic (i.e. anger) totus concitatus ... armorum sanguinis ... furens cupiditate ... et ultionis ... avidus." In Ode III pietas is also personified as an opponent and victor (558-9). The chiasmic arrangement of objects and verbs in line 553 reflects the actual disruption from a state of gratia to one of bellum. The motivating passion of anger becomes something tangible in the flashing sword of line 555. The repetition in agitata and agitatus (552 and 555) seems to connect ira and ensis. The description of Mavors (556-7) is particularly effective, with the prominence given to the words sanguinem ... recentem, especially the latter, which frame the line.

The longest descriptive passage in the ode is divided into two sections, one dealing with Mycenae (561-76) and the other covering the sea-storm (577-95). In the first of these

sections most of the notable effects are achieved by a particular word-order. The juxtaposition of civilis and crepuere (562) produces a harsh sound with the alliteration of "c" (also of "r") which matches the sense of the line. The adjective and noun pallidae ... matres (563) embrace the line just as the anxious mothers are depicted holding their children. The starkness and brevity of this line produce a vivid, expressive description. Another graphic depiction is that of the sword in lines 565-6 which appears almost as an animate object. The repetition of ensis (555 and 565) seems to be deliberate, providing a contrast the flashing weapon of ira and the man's sword which comes unwillingly to his hand, rusted with disuse. In lines 567-70, the swift, repeated rhythm of the closing infinitives and nouns in each line suggests the intense activity of the bustling defenders. This effect is enhanced by the similarity of sound in the endings of the infinitives "-are", "-ire" and "-ere" and of the nouns "-os", "-es" and "-is", and by the alliteration in the pairs of words e.g. "r" in line 567 and "c" and "r" in line 569. Another good example of sustained alliteration and assonance occurs in lines 573-5, which lead up to the climactic statement about the return of alta pax (576). The four lines together complete the section on war and prepare the way for the extended simile (577ff.).

The passage about the storm contains examples of effective word-order and alliteration similar to the types already detailed. One might note the assonance of "u" in line 577,

tumuere fluctus and the rhythm of these six syllables which is suggestive of the motion. It has been stated²² that the sea-image acts as a transition from the theme of war and peace to the idea of fickle fortune. By repeating certain key words or phrases Seneca binds the themes closer together. For example, the repeated use of altus in lines 576, 577 and 590 connects the ideas of peace and sea. The sea, altum, produces fluctus as well as flat calm (590) and the point of the connection is that peace also is subject to such changes. Line 573 announced that now the savage swords had fallen, battle was ended,

Iam minae saevi cecidere ferri.

Similarly, when the force of the storm abates the expression is,

si suae ventis cecidere vires. (588).

The scene of calm water is enhanced by the entertaining detail of the water being so clear that one could count the fish (593). One might note also that Seneca, at the conclusion of this description, returns to the theme of storm (cf. 594-5 and 577f.), a type of ring-composition noted in Ode II, 348-90.

In the closing passage of the ode, one can discern the language of storm which links the ideas of storm and fortune.²³ The swelling waves of line 577 may be recalled in the phrase inflatos tumidosque vultus (609). (cf. H.F. 169-71 where the comparison in fluctuque magis becomes a metaphor aura tumidum tollit inani). The workings of fortune are also described in terms of a storm (621-2).

The storm image is not particularly strong throughout the play but it is worth noting some places in the action where

the language of storm is connected with important events.²⁴ The Messenger enters on the wings of a storm in lines 623f. and wishes he could be swept away by the procellae (637). Such storm winds are referred to by the Chorus in line 594 sub procella and more emphatically by Thyestes in line 996. At this moment in Act IV, he has seen the strange phenomena in the sky and senses that something is wrong. Not realising that an evil fate has already befallen him he cries,

... omnis in vile hoc caput
 abeat procella. (996-7)

Earlier in this Act, where he felt premonitions of disaster, he expressed this in a nautical image describing how the calm seas tument without a wind before the tempestas breaks out. The idea of tumultus, swelling, extended beyond its application to the sea, occurs where someone senses or describes the approach and growth of some power or force, usually connected with evil.²⁵ The Fury urged Tantalus to fill his breast insano ... tumultu (86) before carrying out the evil orders. When Atreus felt the growing of inspiration to commit some great crime, he experienced a tumultus ... attonitus (260). Thyestes upbraids himself for imagining strange feelings of grief and tumultus (961) and then, just before he is forced to learn the truth, he feels a physical revulsion,

Quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea? (999)

In this way the central image of storm (and fate) is reflected in the rest of the play.

The fourth ode consists of anapaests which are arranged in dimeters with an occasional monometer, a common occurrence in Seneca's anapaests. There is disagreement between the two manuscript traditions, A and E, as to how certain lines should be arranged.²⁶ However, since Giardina's text is the basis for this thesis, his line references will be used for these doubtful passages, in which one may discuss metre and word-order with reference to a group of metra, where it is clear that, within such a group, some special combination of language and metre is achieved.

It is noticeable in this ode that Seneca takes advantage of the heavy, slow rhythm of the spondaic foot. In this ode of disaster it is particularly the negative and ominous statements which are thus underlined, e.g. line 794,

nondum serae nuntius horae

and similarly lines 798 and 801, each of which repeats nondum. The same heavy beat is evident between lines 835 and 838 where emphasis falls on the non aeternae and non Phoebeis. A striking group of spondaic syllables occurs in the line which opens the final section. The Chorus here turn to considering themselves and the transition to this new topic is emphasised by the metre;

Nos e tanto vis populo (875).

Although the arrangement of lines 877ff. is dubious, yet one can detect a metrical similarity in the phrases in nos aetas (877) and o nos dura (878).

The anapaestic metre allows a certain variety in its

arrangement of anapaests, dactyls and spondees. In this respect the metre differs from those of the previous odes where the same metrical pattern is invariably repeated from line to line. The sentence structure, however, follows much the same pattern as before. The ode is carefully structured so that each series of questions (789ff. and 801ff.) is followed by a descriptive passage, and the portrayal of the imminent disappearance of the stars is introduced by the exclamatory statement in lines 827ff. In fact, lines 801-3, repeating the sense of the questions in lines 789ff., close the first section by means of ring-composition and at the same time introduce the speculation about the Giants. The final section, from line 875, has notably shorter sentences (cf. Ode II 391ff.) as the Chorus make a brief statement about their own hopeless position.

The use of anaphora and other, related types of repetition is as notable in this ode as in the other three. The ode opens with the repetition of quo (789-91), which immediately expresses the Chorus' bewilderment. The description of the sudden darkness and its untimeliness is highlighted by the reiteration of nondum at the beginning of lines 796, 798 and 801. The following questions (802-10) each open with a form of quid, e.g. quae (803) and then numquid (804-6 and 810). The shortened version num (808) adds further variety. Seneca does not in every instance repeat words with complete uniformity, a procedure which would soon be overworked. Instead, in a long list of statements, he varies the form of the repeated word or the

structure of the clause. In lines 824-6 the repetition of non is separated by nec ullo (825). In the lengthy description of the destruction of the Zodiac, the series begins with repetition of hic qui (844, 848, 852); then comes et qui (860), a variation in the parenthetical quisquis es (865) and a return in the end to et qui (869). This series of relative clauses bears some resemblance to Ode II 348ff. and Ode III 599ff.

Ode IV contains examples of all the figures of speech already noted, which exhibit again the facility with which Seneca chooses and places words. In lines 813ff. Seneca reinforces the idea of ignorance and strangeness by using a series of words which express the same or related sense e.g. solitae (813), assueta (815), nescit (818) and insueto (with novus, 821). An obvious recurrence of the same words in the same form and case is found in lines 860-2,

et qui nervo tenet Haemonio
pinnata senex spicula Chiron
rupto perdet spicula nervo.

The words nervo and spicula are repeated exactly but in reverse order. There is a sort of ring-composition within these three lines and the result is a contrast between the originally intact bow-string and its present destruction. The effectiveness of the lines' structure is enhanced by the alliteration of "p", "s" and "r". The metrical rhythm also plays a part. Line 861 consists of a dactyl and spondee in the first metron and this pattern is repeated in the next two feet. After the compara-

tive lightness of this line, there is added emphasis on the opening spondees of line 862 rupto perdet.

Many examples of alliteration and assonance can be detected in Ode IV, but the most notable ones occur in conjunction with some other device, e.g. the emphatic repetition of "d" in the phrase ... dux / ... ducens dabit, which is combined with an example of paronomasia. Worthy of note also is the alliteration of "p" and "m", as well as the similarity of the syllables "pec" and "per" in the phrase pectora magno percussa metu (828-9). Weight is given to the words terrarum superumque parens (789) by the similarity of sounds, and vehemence to the expression

vitae est avidus quisquis non vult

with the repetition of "v". Alliteration is often best used where it somehow reflects the sense of the words. In line 800, for example, there is the similarity in sound in stupet ad subitae which emphasises the connection in sense. It is the suddenness of the change which has caused the ploughman to stand amazed. In line 854 the harsh sounds of "c" might be indicative of the nature of the Crab. The repetition of the long syllable "lu" in

fluminis instar lubricus Anguis (870)

reflects the sense of the image. This effect is also aided by the metre which consists of a repeated metron of dactyl and spondee.²⁷

The position of words within a line, sentence or phrase is also an important consideration. Several examples and

types of particular order have been noted above in the discussion of anaphora. There are some particularly good examples in this ode of the ways in which Seneca uses an adjective and noun to frame another word, a phrase or a whole line. In line 790, for example, the phrase medioque ... Olympo encloses the line and the main theme of the loss of daylight. In line 794, serae ... horae enclose their subject, the Messenger who is Vesper.²⁸ Generally such a structure is used to heighten the effect of a phrase or line and to link ideas by the juxtaposition of words. A particular effect is achieved by placing together words of either a related or a different sense.²⁹ For example, in line 821, the phrase insueto novus stresses the idea of strangeness and in the following line the position of sol Auroram is a succinct expression of their confrontation.

Occasionally pairs of adjectives and nouns are arranged in a chiasmic order as in line 855. Sometimes an adjectival phrase with a verb and noun is similarly positioned as in lines 858 and 862. However, the most common arrangement is that of line 870,

fluminis instar lubricus Anguis

where the descriptive terms together separate the nouns, or of line 872,

frigida duro Cynosura gelu

where the two adjectives come together and similarly the two nouns.

My examination of the four odes in the Thyestes has indi-

cated Seneca's skill in using various rhetorical tropes e.g. anaphora, paronomasia and related types of repetition, alliteration and assonance. Since this thesis is concerned primarily with the odes, it is with reference to their examples of rhetorical figures that the following discussion is made.

The abundance of such devices in the Thyestes and the other tragedies has led some critics to label the plays as declamatory or rhetorical, in a pejorative sense. Canter (p.31), for example, has described the Chorus in Senecan tragedy as being deliberately used "for the furtherance of rhetorical effects. Their relation to the dramatic action is slight" Similar criticism comes from Bonner³⁰ when he criticises the Chorus' lack of involvement in the action; "rarely can Choruses have strayed so far from the path in quest of the flowers of rhetoric." However it has already been found in the previous chapter that the odes of the Thyestes are in fact closely linked thematically with the action and it is in this way that the Chorus are involved in the play. The thematic links are made possible through the language of the odes and the significance of the words is enhanced by rhetorical elements.

One cannot dissociate rhetorical elements (e.g. anaphora and paronomasia) from the purely literary, as if the terms "rhetorical" and "literary" were diametrically opposed. In Latin literature, from the Republican days of Cicero onwards, rhetoric and its various figures of speech played an increasingly important part. Horace has been described as a poet

who had little use for "rhetorical tricks",³¹ but his poems contain examples of several rhetorical tropes, e.g. anaphora in C. I 17.13ff., III 4.21ff. and IV 6.29ff.³² In the love elegies of Propertius examples of rhetorical exercises can be found, e.g. "loci communes" and types of "prosopopoeia" (cf. Quintilian, Bk. II 4.22f.).³³ As for Ovid a great deal has been written about rhetoric in his works. The Heroides are a clear example of "suasoriae" or "prosopopoeiae". It is indicative of Ovid's style of composition that he receives considerable attention from the elder Seneca.³⁴

Rhetoric, and the special techniques it employed, was first consciously used in the delivery of public speeches, when people such as Gorgias realised the persuasive force that certain modes of expression possessed. In the examples I have noted from Roman poetry, the persuasive power of rhetoric is just as important, in influencing the audience of a recitation or the single reader. In drama, whether it was staged or recited, rhetoric as an influencing element could be used to its full advantage. It is hardly surprising to find an abundance of rhetorical elements in Seneca's tragedies since rhetoric itself formed part of his education and his father was an accomplished orator.³⁵ Rhetorical tropes, therefore, as a means of enhancing poetical expression and especially of reinforcing important statements and arguments (e.g. in Ode II) are not an intrusion in the Thyestes, but are an integral part of its composition.³⁶

PART II

In many respects Senecan style in the odes reflects the techniques of Horace who was a very careful writer. The order of words within a line or stanza, or sometimes between stanzas, is an important consideration in Horatian odes³⁷ and the same care can be seen in the work of Virgil.³⁸ The odes in the Thyestes, and in the other Senecan plays, reflect some of the themes and language of these two poets. A great deal of work has been done on the subject of Horatian and Virgilian parallels in the odes of Seneca's tragedies.³⁹ However, a survey of all the Horatian passages quoted by Spika, Zingerle and Keseling as parallels for the odes in the Thyestes indicates that few of these so-called parallels have a close or important connection with their Senecan counterparts. A similarity involving one or two words does not necessarily prove that Seneca is imitating a Virgilian or Horatian expression. Furthermore a Senecan reminiscence of an earlier poet need not be deliberate or conscious. Where, however, some close similarity in theme, language or technique is discernible, then some critical comment is required. Some examples of the passages quoted by Spika, Zingerle, Keseling and Ter Haar Romeny will therefore be examined to assess their possible influence on the odes of the Thyestes.

In Ode I there is really no close similarity between Seneca and Horace on the subject of Tantalus, so that Spika's passages have little significance. One passage, however, is worth noting as it exhibits just the kind of verbal devices

found in Seneca; C. II 18.37-40, Tantalum atque Tantalii / (genus) ... // vocatus atque non vocatus audit. There is one Horatian passage cited by Spika and Zingerle which has connections in language and theme with the Chorus' prayer in lines 134-5. In C. III 6.46-8, Horace deplores the degeneration of Roman society,

aetas parentum peior avis tulit
 nos nequiores, mox daturos
 progeniem vitiosiore.

The similarity to Seneca is quite marked. It is possible that Seneca had some recollection of this Horatian passage whose theme is so close to his own. The expression in Ode I, however, with its pointed contrast of maior ... minoribus, is characteristically Senecan.

Ode II provides the largest number of Horatian parallels. Horace does not refer to any specific type of rex such as the Chorus depict in the Thyestes. However, his tirades against wealth, luxury and power which is abused do exhibit close similarities to some of the description in Ode II. It is the verbal similarities which will be considered here while the possible effects of Horatian influence on Seneca's philosophical outlook will be discussed in the following chapter. The theme of fratrum ... minas (338) and furor (339) has an interesting parallel in Epode VII which refers to furor caecus (13) and scelus fraternae necis (18) which refers, presumably, to Romulus and Remus. For the topics of "vanitas potentiae" and "tranquillitas vitae obscurae" source material

abounds in C. II 16, C. III 1, 2 and 3.⁴⁰ Since there are so many relevant passages, only a few of the closest will be considered here. The two opening stanzas of C. III 3, proclaiming the virtues and fearlessness of the Iustum et tenacem propositi virum (1), are very close to lines 348-52 and 358-62 of Ode II, both referring to natural storms and the fickle populace. Seneca, however, is much more expansive in his description and introduces also the themes of wealth and power (cf. C. II 16 and C. III 1 and 2). Despite the similarities in language and theme, the poets differ widely in purpose, for Horace's vir and Seneca's rex are two quite different ideas. The Horatian character is set in a political environment and is described in terms of positive actions, possibly even as an allusion to Augustus (cf. 11-12). The rex of Ode II, however, is quite removed from a political setting and defined mostly by negative statements. The life that is praised by the Chorus is similar to Horace's parva rura (C. II 16.37 cf. C. III 1.45ff.). The hope expressed in Horace, C.S. 46 di, senectuti placidae quietem / ... date., is similar to Ode II (397ff.) but the Senecan ode is hardly a patriotic poem.

In general, a considerable amount of the verbal expression in Ode II of the Thyestes is drawn from Horace. However, the descriptions are applied to an idea or figure in Ode II which is un-Horatian. The idealisation of the Senecan rex is a reflection on the rest of the play (not necessarily a real situation) and the theme, as was seen in the previous chapter, is closely linked to the dramatic action and specifically to the

characters of Atreus and Thyestes.

The third ode does not contain so many Horatian parallels, some of those cited by Spika and Zingerle having only the slightest connections with Seneca's ode. For example C. II 14. 13 *cruento Marte* is not very close to *sanguinem Mavors* (557). There is an interesting similarity in language between lines 574-5 and C. II 1.17-18,

*iam nunc minaci murmure cornuum
perstringis aures, iam litui strepunt.*

However, the ideas behind the expressions of the two poets are different. Horace is referring to the heroic and warlike topics which sound out in Pollio's history, not his poetry. In Seneca the reference is to the silence of these instruments of war and to a situation in the play, not a general reference to historical events.

For the description of the calming of the sea-storm in lines 587-8, a connection is made by Spika with C. I 12.30-32 which includes the phrases *concidunt venti* and *unda recumbit*. Horace's theme may have been inspired by the defeat of a rebellion⁴¹ and the calming of the sea is a parallel to the restoration of "political" order. But Seneca need not necessarily have had this poem in mind, for this type of sea-image goes back a long time before Horace.⁴² Seneca constructs the image in a much more effective way, linking it with political life and the vagaries of fortune. For the concluding section of Ode III on the *levis hora*, there are several relevant passages in Horace, e.g. C. I 34.12-13, III 1.14-16 and II 3.25-27.

Line 612 on each kingdom being sub regno graviore is similar to C. III 1.5-6.

regum timendorum in proprios greges,
reges in ipsos imperium est Iovis.

The balance and careful repetition in the Horatian couplet is reflected in Seneca's single line.

In Ode IV there are fewer verbal echoes between Horace and Seneca. This may be due, partly, to the subject matter which is not an important element in Horace's poetry. Most of the passages suggested by Spika depend only on the recurrence of proper names such as the Giants (C. II 19.22, III 1.7 and III 4.42f.) or Pelion (C. III 4.49f.) and the Zodiacal signs such as Leo (C. III 29.19). There are two examples of fairly close passages in the description of the constellations and lights in the sky as decus in line 791 (cf. C.S. 2 lucidum caeli decus which refers to Phoebus) and in the miniature portrait of the amazed ploughman (801) with nondum fessis bobus (cf. C. III 6.42-3 bobus fatigatis and Epode II 63 fessos vomerem inversum boves).

In conclusion, I would suggest that apart from Ode II, the odes in the Thyestes do not exhibit a heavy dependence on Horatian poetry for verbal expression. With regard to Ode II and passages in the other odes which are very similar to Horace's, it would seem that Seneca has been influenced by Horace's choice of words which were presumably the best or most fitting way to express a particular thought. Even in these cases, however, Seneca has made something of his own from these

borrowings.

There are not many passages in Ter Haar Romeny's collection of Virgilian parallels which are relevant to the Thyestes. In connection with Ode III and the storm image (588), he cites Aen. VIII 88ff. where the river Tiber calms himself in morem stagni placidaeque paludis. However, one can detect closer similarities in a passage he does not include, namely the storm scene in Aen. I 81ff. It is interesting to note that in the Virgilian passage the storm is the main theme while the idea of civil disorder (148-53) occurs in a simile. In Seneca's ode, however, the emphasis is the reverse. There are some verbal echoes which may be considered relevant. Virgil mentions stagna (125), procellis (85), vastos fluctus (86) and tumida aequora (192) which can be compared to Seneca's lines 577 and 589. There is marked alliteration in line 124 of Aen. I, describing the murmur of the sea, a sound which Seneca applies to the war-trumpets (574). Similarly the strident noise of Seneca's lituus (575) is, in Virgil line 102, the howling of the north wind. The Virgilian simile contains allusions to furor (150) and pietas (151) as two opposing forces just as ira and pietas are opposed in Seneca's ode (546-59).

Ter Haar Romeny also omits the descriptions of Mavors in Virgil, Aen. VIII 700-01, X 755-6 and XII 332-3. This last passage,

sanguineus Mavors clipeo increpat atque furentis
bella movens immittit equos ...

is particularly close to Seneca's personification in lines

556-7. Other passages which have not been noted are references to the constellations in the Georgics. In Ode IV 871 Seneca had a very striking description of Anguis, a constellation which Virgil describes with even more elaboration in G. I 244-5.⁴³ As regards the other stars, Seneca follows the traditional portrayals (e.g. Taurus 852, Leo 855 and Scorpio 859). But he does introduce some individual elements in his description of Chiron (860-2) and his reference to Aegoceros (863-4), neither of which occurs in Virgil or Horace with these names.

In view of the passages from Horace and Virgil detailed above, it would seem that Seneca has been quite selective in his borrowings. There are not many close parallels in the odes of the Thyestes. Where Seneca has borrowed an expression, it is invariably applied to a somewhat different idea. Where there is some thematic, and verbal, connection, Seneca has developed and adapted it to suit his own requirements. In the odes of the Thyestes Seneca has exhibited his own skill in handling language, metre and themes and his ability to produce expressive odes which are an integral part of the play.

CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

This chapter is intended to examine certain aspects of the odes which, in conjunction with the characterisation of Atreus and Thyestes and particular themes in the play (e.g. fate and divinity as presented by the Prologue), have sometimes been regarded as reflecting the ideas of certain schools of philosophical thought. The Thyestes does indeed contain a considerable amount of moralising on certain topics (e.g. kingship, power, wealth, anger) which can be seen to bear some resemblance to subjects in Seneca's prose works, but it would be foolish to deduce from this, as some critics have done, that the play is deliberately intended to portray theories from the Stoic school of thought.¹

Before discussing any possible effects of philosophical principles on the tragedies, one must consider Seneca's prose works which reflect his activity as a professional philosopher. From these it is clear that Seneca, while primarily a Stoic (cf. De Otio 3.1), was eclectic in his philosophical views. This is not surprising in view of his diversified education in Stoic, Pythagorean and Cynic ideas,² all of which appear throughout the prose works, especially the Epistles. Seneca admits his use and rejection of ideas belonging to others, e.g. Ep. 80.1, 33 and 12.11, which stress that the best ideas are communia. He quotes freely from Epicurus often stating that he expressed some idea particularly well (cf. Epistles

10 to 30).

Motto has stressed that Seneca as a philosopher was "devoted to the concrete, the societal, the humane" (p.26) and remarks further (p.56) on his concern for humanity (e.g. Ep. 48.2). It is not, however, surprising that Seneca should show such interests, for the branch of philosophical study with which he was concerned was ethics, the principles of human life and conduct. Thus he devotes himself at times to topical subjects such as slavery, gladiatorial shows and, above all, inept and cruel government (cf. Ep. 7 and 47; De Clem. passim; De Ira III, 16, 2f.). But one should note that these interests of Seneca's are not unique nor are his arguments unprecedented (cf. Cicero, In Verrem, De Republica and Tusculan Disputations for topics and theories similar to Seneca's). Sandbach³ has suggested that Seneca introduced some new concepts of will and conscience (cf. also De Ira III, 1-3). However, Seneca is more of an adaptor than an inventor, often incorporating the ideas of other schools where they reinforce the validity of his arguments. He professes no independence of thought, stating only a freedom of choice among existing theories (cf. De Otio III 1 and Ep. 80.1 Non servio illis, sed adsentior.). Similarly, Horace, Ep. I 1. 13-15, claims that he is indebted to various schools of thought, but he is clearly influenced particularly by the Epicurean tradition. One cannot, therefore, state unequivocally that Seneca was a philosophical writer of the Stoic school, or that the doctrines of this school are the primary

influence on his plays.

One must next ask how far Stoicism, or philosophical study in general, affected his attitude to other forms of literature. In Ep. 88 the argument is that literature should teach virtue, and the only ars which achieves this end is philosophy: nihil autem ulla ars alia de bonis ac malis quaerit (Ep. 88.28). Here too he attaches little importance to liberalia studia such as poetry, music and astronomy, regarding the lyric poets as frivolous (Ep. 49.5). This is the orthodox Stoic attitude (cf. Marti pp.217f.). However, the Stoics, as well as the adherents to other philosophies such as Epicureanism, were very aware of the effectiveness of metre and heightened language for expressing one's moral aims. Seneca quotes Cleanthes in Ep. 108.10 on the useful application of poetic expression to philosophical thought. An extensive amount of quotations from poets, notably Virgil, is found in Seneca's prose works, but the passages quoted (e.g. Aen. I 203 and IX 641) seem to be used more for their expressiveness than for any moralistic significance. Only rarely is some maxim detectable (e.g. Aen. VIII 364f. quoted in Seneca, Ep. 18.12 and 31.11). Seneca's use of quotations, therefore, suggests not only his desire to find an eloquent reinforcement of his argument, but also his deep, literary interest in the poetry of masters such as Virgil.

What then was Seneca's attitude to drama? Is it to be totally didactic in purpose? In Ep. 108.8 he comments on the theatre resounding to the utterance of recognised truths, a

statement which forms part of the argument for versified maxims. In Ep. 88.22, with reference to Posidonius, he classes as ludicrae the complicated and awesome machinery of stage productions, an example of an art form not concerned with virtue. The only definite praise of drama occurs in Ep. 8.8, where he comments on its learned and forceful lines. From such evidence one might conclude that, for Seneca, the didactic effect of poetry was to be found in its memorable statement of sententiae. Nowhere does he suggest that drama, as a whole, might have a didactic effect.⁴

There is, therefore, little evidence in the prose writings to confirm the idea that Seneca used the dramatic form primarily as a vehicle for philosophical ideas. One might just as well argue that, considering his wide knowledge of literature and his expertise with language, he might have turned his hand to composing plays as a litterateur rather than as a Stoic philosopher. One must, then, consider the evidence of the plays themselves. To what extent does the Thyestes, and particularly its four odes, portray ideas from the Stoic school? If they are detectable, are they of primary importance? Can one agree that "Stoic ideas conditioned the nature of these plays right from the primary point" and that the odes and characters "are largely dominated by Stoic thought"?⁵

My starting point for this discussion is Ode II, whose theme is of special importance for the whole play and for the characterisation of Atreus and Thyestes. This ode is con-

cerned mainly with the theme of kingship, discussed in relation to wealth, power and retirement from life. Such topics do occur frequently in Seneca's prose works, just as they do in the writings of any philosopher who is concerned with the guiding principles of human life and conduct.

Knoche⁶ has described these topics as being part of "der Popularphilosophie", which is a valid comment, but it will be seen that they also have a long tradition as literary themes.

One must acknowledge first that the ode contains the standard Stoic paradox that only the sapiens is a true rex (whether or not he has political power), since he is the only one who possesses a bona mens (380 cf. Ep. 17.1). In Ep. 114.23 Seneca states that rex noster est animus. With this wisdom the sapiens adopts the correct attitude to wealth and power (cf. 344ff. and 388-390). Ode II expands these latter topics, and what is said about them is in keeping with some of the views Seneca expresses in his prose works, e.g. the rejection of wealth (Ep. 104.34 and 17.3) as a source of unnecessary fears and anxieties (Ep. 17.3ff.; 14.17-18 and De Const. 3.3-5). This is the content of Ode II 344-90. However, Seneca's discussion of wealth in his prose works has earned him some notoriety from ancient times to the modern day, for it was well known that he himself was extremely wealthy.⁷ He met his critics with the argument, which Panaetius also used, that wealth was an "indifferent", not a necessary possession, but often an advantageous one for the furtherance of virtuous actions. But Ode II clearly says that wealth is

completely undesirable, a statement which contradicts Seneca's personal view. One cannot, therefore, argue that the content of Ode II concerned with riches and possessions reflects Seneca's philosophical attitude.

The dangers inherent in wealth and the fearlessness and independence of an idealised figure are certainly not Stoic elements in Ode II. Horace, an eclectic Epicurean, also deals with these topics (cf. C. II 18.1ff. and Thy. 344ff.). In Chap. II p.72 verbal reminiscences were noted between C. III 3.1ff. and Thy. 348-52 and 358-62 on the fearlessness and lack of greedy ambition of the vir and the rex. Horace, Ep. I 6 contains a description of an idealised figure which could equally suit the rex in Seneca's ode. One of the reasons, perhaps, that followers of two opposite philosophical schools could discuss a topic such as wealth in similar terms is that such a subject and certain attitudes to it stem from a type of traditional moralising which goes far back in literary history, before philosophical literature existed.

It is worth noting here some examples of the traditional treatment of wealth and its dangers. An idea common to several Greek tragedies is that the overabundance of wealth, which belonged usually to those in power, led men to commit excesses which offended the gods. The Chorus in Aeschylus, Agamemnon⁸ 374ff. and 757ff. deal with the theme κόρος - βροίς - ἄτη which forms a progression in man's downfall (cf. Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus 873ff.). The idea of man disregarding Justice (cf. Ag. 383-4 and O.T. 885) and behaving like a vicious tyrant

(especially O.T. 883ff.) has its counterpart in Seneca, Thyestes, in the character of Atreus (cf. Thy. 205 and 215-8) whose tyranny is emphasised by the choral statements in Ode II. The Chorus in the Agam. 471ff. and, to a lesser degree, in the O.T. 863ff. express the hope that they will not fall victim to ἕρπυς.⁹ Similarly, the Senecan Chorus express the desire to live a humble, obscure life (Thy. 391ff.). Even such a brief examination as the preceding indicates the traditional nature of certain elements in Ode II (and also in the character of Atreus), elements which certainly do not reflect Stoic doctrine.

As regards the last section of Ode II (391ff.), one can detect aspects which are traditional and unphilosophical (as observed above), and statements which suggest the doctrines of schools other than Stoicism. The Chorus here contrast themselves with the man who stands aulae culmine lubrico (392), wishing instead for obscurity, quies and otium, (393-9). This type of contrast is common in Horace's poetry e.g. C. II 16.20ff., 18 and III 1.9ff. The concept of otium, of being in peaceful surroundings and living unknown, is closely linked with the Epicurean doctrine, λάθρε βιωσας. The language of the Senecan Chorus is very similar to Horace's throughout this final section, and, in reflecting the expression of Horace's ideas, the Chorus reflect also the influence on him of Epicurean thought. The last three lines of the ode (401-3 especially ignotus ... sibi) suggest the Socratic maxim γινῶθι σεαυτόν, as I observed earlier (Chap. I p.22).

Ode II, therefore, contains a Stoic theory (380 and 388-90) and ideas from Epicurean and Socratic philosophy, combined with a moralising attitude traditional in tragic Choruses. One should note also that the theme of kingship has particular relevance to Seneca's era, dominated by completely autocratic and usually tyrannical rulers. A parallel to the ode's theme of retirement is found in De Otio 18.3-
quod si non invenitur illa res publica quam nobis fingimus,
incipit omnibus esse otium necessarium, a comment which arises not from philosophical theorising, but from personal experience in Roman Imperial politics. All these varied aspects of Ode II, in conjunction with the different levels of irony they create (cf. Chap. I pp.22-3), surely indicate that this ode, which is the most moralising of the four in the Thyestes, does not have a particular philosophical theory as its primary source, nor is it intended to teach the doctrines of one school of thought.

Criticism of the Thyestes has tended to concentrate on the two characters, Atreus and Thyestes, for evidence of philosophical influence on the play. I have already indicated above, and in Chap. I pp.16-21, that an understanding of the themes in Ode II is particularly significant for the interpretation of these two characters. Since my examination of the ode shows how little connection it has with any one philosophy, such as Stoicism, it is worth while considering just how much influence philosophical theory has had on the characterisation of Atreus and Thyestes.

The figure of Atreus has been described by Knoche as portraying "den Geist der Wider-Natur".¹⁰ He draws extensive parallels between the Thyestes and Seneca's prose works in order to show the doctrines portrayed in the dramatic figure. Similarly Marti¹¹ describes the Medea and Phaedra as portrayals of the passion discussed in De Ira. This prose work, on the subject of anger, cannot be entirely ignored in a discussion about the Thyestes' philosophical aspects, for there are many similarities in thought between the prose and the drama which are well worth noting.

In De Ira I 1.1f. ira craves for blood and vengeance even if the avenger must perish along with the victim, a desire which finds a parallel in Atreus' first speech 179ff.. He labels himself iratus Atreus (180) and line 191 expresses his irrational lust for vengeance,

ruat vel in me, dummodo in fratrem ruat.

Anger is impotens ... decoris oblita (I 1.2f.) and Atreus' dialogue with his attendant shows just how intemperate and immoral he is. The description in De Ira I 1.4 of an angry man's appearance being intumescens is found also in the effect passion has on Atreus (e.g. tumultus 260 and tumet 268).

However, the language Seneca uses in prose and play, to describe ira and its influence, is not especially philosophical or theoretical; it is largely poetic. The vivid personification of ira in De Ira I 1.1-2 (cf. Thy. 552ff.) has a long literary tradition. The theme of tumida ira occurs frequently in Virgil, Aeneid (e.g. 6.40 and 8.40) and the personified Dirae in Aen. 8.700ff. closely resemble Seneca, Thy.

552ff. (cf. also Chap. I p.75).

Human passion has been a concern of poets, dramatists and philosophers since time immemorial and, in the field of drama, it is prominent in the tragedies of Euripides (e.g. his Medea and Hippolytus). Seneca's plays go a step further towards being psychological studies of passion, using ancient myths as a basis, but dealing with emotions which are ever contemporary. It is true that the philosophers of the Stoic school were particularly noted for their interest in human passions and Seneca has devoted a whole work to one passion, anger. Marti is right in saying that Senecan plays portray passion, but she is mistaken in suggesting that they were deliberately composed to expound the Stoic view on this subject. Seneca's deep psychological interest in human emotions and behaviour is not necessarily a result of his being associated with a particular school of philosophical thought. He shares this interest with many non-philosophical predecessors.

There are aspects of the treatment of furor in the Thyestes which clearly contradict the tenets of the Stoic school. For example, the Stoics argued that a sense of being injured led to a mental disturbance which, if one's judgement confirmed this sense, developed into an irrational passion. If a right judgement were made, this passion would be forestalled. Because of the part played by conscious assent, man could be held responsible for his actions (cf. De Ira II 1.3ff.). In this way the Stoics could show that the wise man was in control of such senses and passions. But, in order to

show that the wise man was not completely lacking in emotional responses, the Stoics also stated that the initial motus was involuntary (De Ira II 4.1f.).

If the Thyestes were intended to indicate Seneca's belief in such arguments, one might expect this to be seen in the treatment of Atreus' ira; but on the point of motivation, on the opposition of passion and reason, the presentation of Atreus' character is quite inconsistent with the Stoic theory of psychology. It is important to note that in his first line (192) Atreus appears urging himself on into a frenzy. When he addresses his animus (192), he is not asking his reason to control and destroy passion (as a sapiens would have done) but, rather, is exhorting his reasoning faculties to direct his emotions towards some plan of fulfilment, to follow the example of his forefathers (cf. incipe / animosque sume 241-2). His most emphatic expression is when he freely invites the approach of dira Furiarum cohors (250f.). It is only after this willing and determined self-exhortation that the furor comes upon him (260f.). He barely hesitates to consider this strange phenomenon and emphatically yields to it- fiat hoc, fiat nefas (265). In Atreus it is the will which actually stirs up passion; it is not passion controlling reason. As Braden has said, "Senecan characters ... commit evil ... because they feel they ought to."¹² Atreus feels he has some obligation to himself to be avenged on his brother.

Atreus' passionate nature, his vengefulness, his tyrannical attitude and treachery as a ruler indicate clearly that

he is not an example of a Stoic sapiens. As a king his maximum bonum is tyranny (205-7), his maximum probrum (176-7) to be unavenged. His opinion of the qualities of kingship is summed up in lines 217-8 and 247-8, in regno meo / mors impetratur.

However, the characterisation of Atreus does share some of the qualities of the sapiens (cf. Knoche pp.479-80). Atreus has no regard for the natural laws which normally govern human behaviour, and thereby he attains great freedom in action and judgement. The sapiens, however, would reach such a state by quite different means. Atreus is fixed in intent and remains unperturbed by natural and unnatural phenomena.. He is not over-awed at lines 260ff. or 885ff., remaining, on the contrary, "standhaft und sich selbst getreu" (Knoche p.480, cf. Thy. 703-4 sed solus sibi / immotus Atreus constat). Complete success is his in the last Act when he feels himself equal to the stars and superior to all, perhaps even the gods (886f.). Similarly, the wise man has a mind that is solidus in face of external injuries or attacks (De Const. 3.5), and, in particular, he is not subject to perturbationes (cf. De Const. 9.3). He is ... placidus, inconcussus; cum dis ex pari vivit (Ep. 49.14).¹⁴ It is paradoxical that it is this utter villain, "ce caractère de scélérat et réussi",¹⁵ who attains the pinnacle of determination, consistency and complete freedom.

The presentation of Atreus' character is not designed to illustrate the theories of the Stoic school. Poe¹⁶ has des-

cribed Atreus as portraying a "sadistic voluptas" and, though he notes the resemblances to De Ira, he rightly concentrates on the strongly dramatic presentation of this theme. The Thyestes offers a study of passion which indicates, not Seneca's philosophical learning, but his interest in the psychological effects of passion on a man who possesses power, an interest encouraged by his learning and his acquaintance with the prominent figures of Imperial Rome.

Thyestes was once regarded as exemplifying the characteristics of the Stoic sapiens, but this view has been strongly refuted by critics such as Steidle¹⁷ and Knoche. In Chap. I pp.23-5 I observed that Thyestes' expressions echoed and yet conflicted with the Chorus' utterances in Ode II, on the subject of true kingship. Here I shall offer some additional evidence which shows conclusively that the characterisation of Thyestes does not reflect the ideas of any one philosophical school, and to indicate, in particular, that he does not portray a Stoic sapiens.

Considerable attention should be paid to Thyestes' first speech (404ff.). It is natural that a returning exile should be overjoyed to see his homeland again, but one should note which aspects of his patria Thyestes particularly welcomes. The expression summum ac maximum bonum (405), which parallels Atreus' remarks in lines 176-7, might seem to recall the philosopher's concept of the highest good (cf. Seneca, Ep. 71). However, Thyestes' bonum consists of Argolicas opes (404), sacras turres (407-8), the palman he used to win (410) and the

populus frequens (411) who will rush to welcome him. These desires or aims are described by Seneca in his letters as being either unnecessary for a good life or sources of evil to be avoided (cf. Ep. 94.59-60 on ambition and plausus, and 69f., and Ep. 17 passim).

One may therefore discern in the above lines a faint longing in Thyestes to recover a mode of life he once experienced. However, he now turns to the other viewpoint, that of one who has experienced the blacker qualities of power (414ff.). He seems to speak with the voice of experience in lines 414-5,

... clarus hic regni nitor

fulgore non est quod oculos falso auferat.

His comment here can be paralleled by the expression in Ep. 94.58, Vis scire, quam falsus oculos tuos deceperit fulgor?, and might seem to suggest some philosophical attitude to the topic of false splendour. However, in my earlier discussion on wealth, pp.81-3, I indicated that the topic was treated in a traditional manner. Similarly, Thyestes' comments reflect a type of traditional and general moralising common throughout most ancient literature. It is by just such a falsus fulgor that Thyestes is deluded, allowing himself to fall victim to Atreus' deception (cf. Knoche, pp.484ff.). In his deluded state he is the prime example of a man who is not wise.

It is in this first speech that Thyestes echoes the statements of the Chorus in Ode II 391ff. and his words also betray Horatian influence.¹⁸ His admiration for the simple,

country life sounds particularly Epicurean. The fine oxymoron in line 470,

immane regnum est posse sine regno pati

although it suggests the Stoic theory of non-political kingship, is expressed as an idea suitable for either the Stoic or Epicurean school. As in Ode II, the similarities to Horace's poems and to Epicurean ideas diminish any Stoic influence in Thyestes' words.

In his dialogue with his son (440ff.) and with Atreus (530ff.), Thyestes evinces similar knowledge of the folly of pursuing power (cf. lines 442-3 and 537). It is, therefore, all the more surprising when he yields (488-9 and 542). These changes of attitude occur quite suddenly, just as in his first speech his mood altered radically when he remembered Atreus (412). The clearest example of these fluctuations of mood and intention to which he is subject occurs in the canticum from line 920 onwards, where, from a state of relative optimism (920-41), he again falls prey to fear (941ff.). This inconsistency of character is remarked upon by Seneca in Ep. 120.20-22 as the maximum indicium ... malae mentis and as such it is not a characteristic of the wise man (cf. also Ep. 47.21). Thyestes' changes of mood are caused by fear, an irrational fear which he cannot explain (cf. 434ff. and 964ff.). Whatever he has learned from his exile, it is not sufficient to give him peace of mind or decisiveness, both necessary qualities for a wise man of the Stoic type.

The character of Thyestes, then, seems to portray a man

who is given an opportunity to learn wisdom (i.e. in exile) but who lacks sufficient self-control to attain it. He does not represent the idealised rex of Ode II, barely even an approximation to it.

A theme which is prevalent in Seneca's prose writings is the Stoic concept of a benign Providence. Now, if the Thyestes was intended to portray any Stoic ideas, one might expect the dramatist to indicate the existence of such a guardian deity, especially since the two main characters seem to be in need of guidance. However, it will be seen that there is no Stoic concept of divinity in the play. The gods, in fact, appear even less in Senecan tragedy than in its Greek precursors. For example, after the devastating power of evil presented in the Prologue of the Thyestes, one might expect Ode I to indicate that there exists a more benign deity, who will oppose the force of evil. The Chorus pray to a rather nonspecific deity in de superis si quis (122) and the language they use here is entirely traditional and polytheistic. Indeed, throughout the play there is not much evidence for any definite concept of divinity. It is true that there are sporadic references to the gods throughout the play. Tantalus appeals to magne divorum parens (90), the Chorus to a rector maris atque terrae (607) and Thyestes to summe caeli rector (1077). The finale reminds one of the avenging gods of Aeschylus, Oresteia (e.g. Thy. 1102-12). But the phrases in lines 90 and 1077 (also 1102-12) do not have any particularly philosophical significance, especially in

view of what follows line 1077 (cf. 1092ff.). The expression in line 607, however, does suggest a deity whose powers extend beyond the traditional concept of Jupiter, a deity of the type found in Seneca's prose works. Using terms which suggest monotheism, Seneca refers to god as arbiter ... universi (Ep. 16.5) and in Ep. 58.27f. he gives a full description of this solicitous rex, tutor and artifex. These are all terms which belong to the Stoic concept of god, but one line in the Thyestes does not show that the play is influenced by such concepts.

The family curse of the Tantalidae traditionally involves the gods and Seneca, for whatever purposes he composed the play, could not ignore this element.¹⁹ However, the traditional attitude to the gods was certainly not Stoic, nor is there anything especially Stoic about crime receiving due punishment (cf. Thy. 150-1). This idea is as old as man, exemplified in ancient myths which received literary treatment in epic (e.g. Homer, Od. I 29ff., the gods' discussion of Orestes) and in drama (e.g. Aeschylus, Ag. 55ff. the gods take revenge on transgressors cf. Thy. 610ff.). The theme of inherited guilt and crime, which is strong in the Prologue and Ode I of the Thyestes, is an old, traditional idea (cf. Aeschylus, Ag. 1577ff. and Sophocles, Ant. 548ff.).

The theme of inherited guilt raises the question of the role of the supernatural figures in the Prologue of the Thyestes - the ghost of Tantalus and the Fury. The origin of these two figures is firmly based in literary tradition.

They introduce the audience of a play to the action that will take place and, sometimes, to the main characters (cf. the ghost of Polydorus in Euripides, Hekabe and the dialogue between Apollo and Thanatos in his Alcestis). The Fury is an ancient figure of revenge, a servant of the gods (cf. Aeschylus, Eumenides and Euripides, Herakles). Descriptions of her in Roman literature are well represented by those in Virgil, Aeneid VIII 700ff. and VII 323ff. (as Allecto). Much of Seneca's material for his presentation of Tantalus and the Fury is derived from such sources.

The main question here is whether Tantalus and the Fury have any philosophical significance. They might be regarded as representing a metaphysical destiny, the fate of man. The Stoics generally regarded Fate as being the same as Providence (cf. Arnold p.202 quoting Zeno) and, therefore, ultimately beneficial to mankind (cf. Seneca, De Prov. 5.7-8 fata nos ducunt and the advice to the wise man to praebere se fato). If the Fury is to be understood as a "Werkzeug der Gottheit" (cf. Knoche p.489), as an instrument of Providence, then she and her activities must be right, in accordance with the order of the world, and good. However, it is quite clear from the Fury's words in the Prologue and from the subsequent action of the play, that the forces which are represented by the Fury are totally in contrast to the Stoic concept of divinity and world-order.

One is left, then, with the idea that the figures in the Prologue might be understood as symbolising an inherited ten-

dency to evil. The inheritance of crime is referred to emphatically in the play, e.g. by Tantalus (18ff.), the Fury (28ff.) and the Chorus (132ff.). The Prologue suggests that the evil is caused not by an external force or deity, manipulating mankind for its own ends, but by an inner force which can exist in all men, and especially in men of a certain type. A good parallel for the type of symbolism in the Thyestes occurs in Euripides, Hippolytus where the Prologue is spoken by Aphrodite, traditionally an anthropomorphic goddess who becomes, in the play, a symbol of the destructive power of love.²⁰ Similarly, the language in the Prologue of Seneca's play indicates that Tantalus and the Fury are more than external agents. In line 53, imple Tantalos totam domum, the Fury clearly shows that Tantalus represents inherited crime. The ghost himself uses terms suggesting symbolism when he tries to refuse being a poena or a dirus vapor (87). The process of infesting the House is one necessarily carried out from within (cf. lines 85 and 260ff.), for Tantalus is not just a ghost from the past, but a symbol of that inherent part of Atreus' and Thyestes' character which has been and will be evilly aroused. Poe (pp.361-2; see note 16), who observes a difference in the portrayal of "sadistic voluptas" between De Tranq. An. 2.10-14 and the Thyestes, comments that "Atreus' act is motivated by something bigger than he is. It is preordained by something inherent in his nature" and this is something which "his objective self-consciousness" cannot control.

The symbolism in the Prologue has nothing to do with Stoic philosophy, which has no place for the idea of inherited crime. As a writer of philosophical ideas, Seneca stresses man's own responsibility for his actions and desires, but in the play it is clear that he has not applied this theory.²¹ The Prologue indicates that Atreus is not totally responsible for his actions.

The fickleness of Fortune, which appears at the end of Ode III (i.e. 596ff. and 617ff.), is another traditional theme in the play. In poetry and drama Fortuna is a deity more or less in her own right,²² to whom man could attribute a significant part of life's bad experiences. The Stoics recognised this chaotic power and advised one to be mentally prepared to accept the blows of Fortune. Seneca takes this line of argument in Ep. 91.2f. where he describes the power of Fortuna - quid enim est, quod non fortuna, cum voluit, ex florentissimo detrahat?. She attacks especially that which speciosius fulget, striking at any time - in ipsis voluptatibus causae doloris oriuntur. One can see that these statements have much in common with the topic in Thy. 596ff. and 968-9. What is particularly noticeable is the further development of the theme in Ep. 91 to include war, peace and the metaphor - in subitas tempestates hibernisque maiores agitur aestiva tranquillitas.

The sea-image plays an important role in Ode III. It occurs frequently in Seneca's prose writings as a means of describing the capricious nature of Fortune. In Ep. 4.7 he

gives the warning which rings out in the ode - noli huic tranquillitati confidere; momento mare evertitur. This use of sea-imagery is far from being a new idea since it can be traced to the earliest Greek literature. Two examples which indicate the traditional nature of the idea are Sophocles, O.T. 1527,

εἰς κλύδωνα δεινῆς συμφορᾶς ἐλήλυθεν.

and Horace, Sat. II 2.126,

saeviat atque novos moveat Fortuna tumultus.

The theme of Fortuna, as expressed in the Thyestes, is literary in origin and does not reflect the Stoic attitude. Indeed, Fortune in Ode III is aligned with the ruling force in man's life, an idea which no Stoic could maintain.

The philosopher can exhort his reader to arm himself against fortuitous events, to prepare his mind as his source of defence. Valentior enim omni fortuna animus est, Seneca says in Ep. 98.2. In a philosophical context the idea can be suggested that habet etiam mala fortuna levitatem and the advice is - meliora proponere (Ep. 13.11). However, the Chorus in Ode III 596ff. betray a more pessimistic tone, only giving warning about what not to do, to avoid being too hopeful or despairing (cf. 615-6). They present a very bleak picture which is totally in keeping with the general tenor of the play.

Ode IV brings us to a topic which has been classed as Stoic.²³ This is the eclipse of the sun and the fall of the stars which have been related to the Stoic doctrine of sympatheia. Arnold, p.238f., comments that the idea that man

is a reflection of the universe - from which stems the theory of sympatheia - is a very ancient one. The Greek philosophers²⁴ expounded this topic and, though it was common to Greek thought, it was fundamental only to the Stoics. In Cicero, N.D. II 22. 58 one finds the idea that the universe displays reactions like ours. However, there are no specific references in Seneca's prose works to this doctrine of sympatheia. With regard to the Thyestes, Poe states (p.374) that "Seneca probably would not have described the effect of Atreus' passion in this way if he had not been prepared by Stoic philosophy to believe that every action has reverberations throughout the universe." However, this seems doubtful since the topic has, in fact, a very sound basis in myth and literary tradition.²⁵

In Sophocles, O.T. 95f. Creon announces that Thebes' troubles are due to a μίασμα. The pestilence has been sent by Apollo in anger at some human crime²⁶ (cf. also 1424f. - Oedipus' ἄγος cannot be tolerated by sun, earth; similarly Euripides, Her. 1159). As well as this idea of pollution, there occurs also in Greek tragedy the idea that supernatural phenomena can accompany crime. For example, in Euripides, Her. 905 the Chorus, hearing something of the murders off-stage, cry out,

θύελλα σείει δῶμα, συμπίπτει στέγη.²⁷

Euripides, El. 699f. recounts the story of Atreus and Thyestes, and lines 726f. deal with the eclipse. They describe the sun, stars and dawn in terms similar to Seneca's. However, in this earlier version of the story the eclipse seems to occur after

Thyestes' crimes of adultery, treachery and theft. But, whenever it happened, the idea of an eclipse indicating the sinfulness of some action remains.²⁸

In Roman literature one might consider the fragment of Accius, Atreus,²⁹

Sed quid tonitru turbida toruo

Concussa repente aequora caeli

Sensimus sonere?

This passage describes a phenomenon similar to those in Seneca, Thyestes. Since we know the play was about Atreus and Thyestes, it is likely that this phenomenon is a reflection of some crime. Ribbeck (p.161) gives some evidence that the eclipse, to which frg. XIII (6) may refer, occurred after Thyestes' feast. If this is so it provides a precedent for Seneca's treatment. The speaker may be a Chorus as there is a first person plural in sensimus and the lines may be in the metrical pattern of two lines of anapaestic dimeters, plus an ithyphallic (with a trochaic base). Seneca's fourth ode is composed of anapaestic dimeters. It is, then, quite possible that the dramatic situation in Accius' play was similar to Seneca's. But one would not argue that Accius used the theme for any reasons other than traditional and dramatic ones, for there is no evidence that he held the views of any particular school of philosophy.

As a philosopher Seneca consistently ridicules superstitions about natural phenomena. Superstition is an error insanientis (Ep. 123.16). It leads to fear (N.Q. VI 3.3) and it deos violat (De Clem. II 5.1). The philosopher was con-

cerned with wisdom and knowledge and, thus, with finding rational causes (cf. N.Q. VI 1.4 Quaerenda sunt trepidis solacia et demendus ingens timor.). The consternatio he describes in this passage (ibid. section 5) fits the Chorus in Ode IV. Most emphatically Seneca states that nihil horum deos facere nec ira numinum aut caelum converti aut terram (N.Q. VI 3.1). The philosopher would probably censor the dramatist for sensationalism, for superstition and bewilderment accompany strange occurrences throughout the Thyestes. If the play were intended to portray the views of the Stoic school, in particular here their attitude to eclipses, one would have expected this to be more obvious in Ode IV.³⁰

In conclusion I would say that there is very little in the Thyestes which can be attributed to influence from a particular school of philosophical thought such as Stoicism. On the contrary, there is much which clearly contradicts Stoic theory, and for this reason the play cannot be regarded as an illustration of doctrines contained in Seneca's prose works, nor as some kind of teaching aid for these doctrines. The Thyestes is scarcely a "moral allegory" (cf. Poe, p.364) in view of Atreus' complete victory. Neither Atreus nor Thyestes provide any evidence that the idealised rex of Ode II can exist,³¹ and the play also denies the existence of a benign Providence.

The traditional elements are much stronger, as I have indicated, than any philosophical aspects. As a dramatist, Seneca may be regarded as continuing a tradition of psycho-

logical drama which has its foundation in the plays of Euripides. The Thyestes is a dramatic presentation of a human passion, of its effects on a man's psychological make-up. Poe's interpretation of the play as portraying the formula "emotion = appetite = impulse to fulfilment of the natural physical functions" (p.368) is, I believe, the one closest to the events of the play, which shows with devastating pessimism the destructive force of human emotions.

CONCLUSION

The choral odes of the Thyestes are of primary importance to the play's structure, which relies not so much on plot or on a sequence of action as on the depiction and development of certain themes. It is in the odes that these themes are pinpointed and expanded. The odes provide a contrast with the action which surrounds them and this throws into higher relief what the odes are saying. Seneca has given the Chorus only a minimal amount of personality, since the significance of the choral odes lies not in the speakers' identity or character, but in their words. The contents of each ode reveal aspects of the main characters (e.g. Ode II) and of the action (e.g. Ode III, the sea-image and sors) which would otherwise not be distinct. These aspects thereby gain a deeper meaning. We would not react to Atreus and Thyestes in quite the same way if the rex theme of Ode II were omitted.

The tone of the odes highlights the horror and tragedy of the situation. For, although the Chorus pray for peace and moderation, such concepts have no influence on the play's characters or events. This ironic contrast in tone is particularly striking in Odes I and II. Before we hear the prayer of Ode I, we have already had an authoritative declaration from the Fury that crime will continue among the Tantalidae. Ode II is strategically placed between the presentations of Atreus and of Thyestes, both of which clearly contradict the Chorus' portrayal of an idealised rex. The irony, however, becomes less prevalent in the last two odes. In Ode III the

Chorus are deceived by Atreus' treachery and welcome the brothers' reconciliation; but Seneca has executed a skilful change of tone during the sea-image so that the Chorus, meditating on the vicissitudes of fortune, do reflect the chaotic state of the actual situation. In Ode IV the Chorus know the truth and one might, therefore, not expect any irony. However, the Chorus concentrate on the expected destruction of the universe, not on Atreus' crime which is still incomplete, and their resignation contrasts ironically with Atreus' victorious entrance. The structure of the Thyestes is a complex interlacing of themes and ironies.

The only relief from the frightening progression of evil in the action is to be found in the lyrical expression of the odes. In Chap. II, I have indicated that Seneca's use of metre is not outstanding, but other elements in the odes do show Seneca's mastery in handling his material. Each of the four odes is characterised by a well-balanced structure and effective use of rhetorical tropes. Seneca's awareness of the added significance to be gained from the strategic positioning of words is admirably displayed throughout the odes. The odes also contain many descriptive passages in which Seneca uses his literary knowledge and skills to their fullest. The poetry of the odes, written with scrupulous care and majestic expressiveness, is thoroughly Senecan.

The discussion of philosophy in the Thyestes has shown that the philosophical ideas of Seneca's prose works may have had a very basic influence, but they do not play an important

role in the drama. There is certainly very little in the odes, or in the play (i.e. lines 380, 388-9 and 607) which indicates the influence of Stoic doctrines. On the contrary, the moralising nature of the material in the odes is mostly derived from traditional, literary sources. In view of this, I do not think that Seneca's aim in composing the plays was primarily philosophical or didactic. If this had been his intention, I believe that the odes would have indicated this more clearly as they would form ready-made vehicles for the dramatist's personal views. I would suggest, therefore, that Seneca's primary motive in composing the Thyestes was an interest in the literary potentialities of the dramatic form.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Oxford Classical Dictionary 2nd edn., ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, (Oxford 1970) s.v. Seneca(2).
2. L. Herrmann, Le Théâtre de Sénèque (Paris 1924) p.329.
3. C.W. Mendell, Our Seneca (New Haven 1941) pp.128 and 138, and throughout.
4. B. Marti, p.219 in "Seneca's Tragedies - A New Interpretation" TAPA 76 (1945) pp.216-45. N.T. Pratt, "The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama" TAPA 79 (1948) pp.1-11 writes (p.8) "the content of the choral passages and the delineation of character are largely dominated by Stoic thought....".
5. C.D.N. Costa, "The Tragedies" in Seneca ed. C.D.N. Costa, (London 1974) pp.96-115.
6. A.R.L. Dewey, The Chorus in Senecan Tragedy Exclusive of Hercules Oetaeus and Octavia (Dissertation Columbia University 1968). On Thyestes see pp.249-82.
7. J.P. Poe, "An Analysis of Seneca's Thyestes", TAPA 100 (1969) pp.355-76.
8. For the growing popularity of comedy and mime under the Empire see W. Beare, The Roman Stage, 3rd edition revised (London 1964) pp.233ff. and M. Bieber, The History of Greek and Roman Theater (Princeton 1961) pp.227ff. These works will hereafter be referred to by the author's name.
9. O. Zwierlein, Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas (Meisenham 1966). For criticism of this work I am indebted to the review by B. Walker in C.Ph. 64 No.3 (1969) pp.183-7.
10. W. Steidle, p.495 in "Die Gestalt des Thyest" in Senecas Tragödien, ed. E. Lefèvre (Darmstadt 1972) pp.490-9.
11. See Tacitus Ann. 11.13.
12. For recitations, sometimes with musical accompaniment, compare Pliny, Ep. 6.21.2 ... audivi Vergilium Romanum paucis legentem comoediam ad exemplar veteris comoediae scriptam and Ep. 5.19.3 and 6 on his talented freedman Zosimas. See also Cicero, De Fin. I 2.4 and Suetonius, Aug. 43.3.

13. For example, Seneca Ep. 80.7 and Apocol. 7.2; Quintilian 11.3.4 and 3.73; Suetonius Nero 21.
14. F.H. Sandbach, The Stoics (London 1975) p.161.
15. Walker (see note 9) p.186.

CHAPTER I

1. The following are the principal works of reference for this chapter; hereafter reference to them will be made by the author's surname and page number:- A. Dewey, The Chorus in Senecan Tragedy Exclusive of 'Hercules Oetaeus' and 'Octavia' (Columbia University 1968); Ulrich Knoche, "Senecas Atreus, ein Beispiel", Antike (1941) pp.60-76; B. Marti, "Seneca's Tragedies - A New Interpretation", TAPA 76 (1945) pp.216-45; W.H. Owen, "Commonplace and Dramatic Symbol in Seneca's Tragedies" TAPA 99 (1968) pp.291-313; J.P. Poe, "An Analysis of Seneca's Thyestes", TAPA 100 (1969) pp.355-76; N.T. Pratt, "The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama", TAPA 79 (1948) pp.1-11.
2. The prologue of Seneca, Agamemnon is also given by a ghost, the ghost of Thyestes who welcomes the granting of revenge for what he has suffered (37ff.). However, this revenge is not the divinely ordained vengeance associated with Aeschylus, Oresteia. Likewise in the Thyestes, there is little evidence of divine control. Seneca is not concerned with displaying the role of man in the gods' plan.
3. One might compare Aeschylus, Oresteia where the House of Pelops is the origin of the successive waves of crime, e.g. Aegisthus' speech, lines 1583ff. in the Agamemnon.
4. Poe, p.367 refers to the Chorus' vain prayer. Dewey, pp.254ff., discusses their natural fear in the circumstances and their being "unsure of the gods". She also notes, on p.255, the irony of the Chorus' belief that Tantalus is in Hades while in fact he is present on earth. She does not, however, comment on the close similarities between Ode I and Act I.
5. When Atreus is formulating his plan he too uses the feast of Tereus (272-3. infandas domus/Odrysia mensas) as a precedent for the crime he will commit against Thyestes. He also uses the examples of his ancestors, Tantalus and Pelops, to urge himself on (242). Similarly in Seneca's Medea 44-48 and Agamemnon 117-24, past precedents are recalled as a justification for action and as something to be surpassed.
6. Poe offers a thorough examination of these themes in the Thyestes to which nothing new can be added here.
7. The Chorus' reaction to the news, and the question exactly how much they know about Act II, depend on the interpretation of lines 336-8. This will be discussed at the end of the present discussion on the ode generally.
8. Dewey, p.261 and footnote 1, comments fully on this use of negatives.

9. Lines 388-9 can stand in this form. According to Giardina, 389 is omitted by the A tradition. A similar case is A's omission of line 149 in the parallel couplet 149-50. Thus a well-balanced couplet would have its symmetry destroyed. Lines 613-4 of Ode II are another example of Seneca's liking for such close parallelism (cf. H.F. 590-1 which round off an ode). The present lines 388-9 recall line 348 without being merely repetitive. The statement contains an important point and this conclusion forms a type of ring-composition from line 344 to line 390. It reminds us what kind of regnum each man bestows upon himself. Otherwise one has to look back to lines 380 or 344ff. for the sense of hoc regnum.
10. I accept the reading of MS. E. The adjective can be used adverbially in the form alternis with vicibus understood. (Lewis and Short alternus II b). In Seneca, Ep. 120 section 19, one finds the parallel usage,
 Quidam alternis Vatinii, alternis Catones sunt.
11. In the previous Act, Atreus welcomed the approach of dira Furiarum cohors (250-4).
12. This topic is fully discussed by Dewey, pp.260-3.
13. Dewey, p.263.
14. Dewey, p.264, discusses succinctly the "philosophical lesson" which this ode presents by means of contrasts with the preceding and succeeding acts.
15. They are deleted by Peiper-Richter, but retained by Leo and Giardina.
16. Cf. Lewis and Short s.v. compono, I B1 and II B5c respectively.
17. There is some doubt about the interpretation of Phoen. 418,
 sic agmen armis segne compositis venit
 where the meaning of opposition is possible. But this is slim evidence. There are however clear parallels in Senecan prose, e.g. De Prov. 1, 2, 9 and N.Q. 4, praef. 8. The most important prose parallel is at N.Q. 5, 18, 6;
 quae nos dementia exagitat et in mutuum componit exitium.
18. In Ode I there was no question of the Chorus' knowing anything of Act I and the content of the ode, consequently, provided an ironic contrast. In Ode II, however, the Chorus must have some knowledge of Act II for the irony of their idealising to be a complete success. Cf. Dewey pp.258-9, note 2, stating that they should be aware only of Thyestes' recall. The question of the Chorus' involvement on stage cannot be conclusively answered since per-

formance itself is doubtful (see Introduction).

19. Dewey, pp.258f. In note 2 p.258 she discusses lines 336-8. She prefers to find a note of optimism since this leads to an overall irony in the ode (cf. p.259).
20. There is also a deliberate ambiguity in Thy. lines 433-4 where there is clear dramatic irony in the use of the phrase laceratae domus/composita artus.
21. R.B. Steele, "Some Roman Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca" AJP 43 (1922) pp.1-31. Not all his examples are entirely convincing e.g. references to the relationship between Agrippina and Claudius (Thy. 42) and to Britannicus' murder (47).
22. This is a topic to be fully discussed in Chap. III.
23. Dewey, on p.267, writes, "His speech is a complement to the choral ode, spoken from a first-hand knowledge of the throne." However, she does not detail Thyestes' possible shortcomings which contrast with the precepts advanced in Ode II.
24. The character of Thyestes will be dealt with in more detail in the chapter on philosophy, with bibliographical references.
25. Thyestes also mentions the currus which is a particular symbol of those who seek recognition or praise e.g. Horace, C.I.1 and Seneca, H.F. 195-6.
26. A very similar theme is to be found in Seneca's Agamemnon, Ode I, lines 57-107. There the Chorus also reflect on the fickleness of Fortune and the dangers of high position. The sailing image is used and they praise the man who hugs the shores and fears to trust his boat to the open sea.
27. For this change of mood within an ode, one might compare the present example with the third Ode in Seneca's H.F. where the theme is supposed to be one of rejoicing (828-30) but the image of the underworld leads the Chorus to a "contemplatio mortis" (cf. line 838ff.).
28. Dewey, p.269.
29. See also Dewey, pp.271-2.
30. Similarly, Dewey, pp.272-3 calls it "a fitting prelude to the catastrophic reversal of the appearance of things" in the subsequent action.
31. Some very close parallels to this part of the Thyestes

are:- Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus lines 1223-96, which announce and describe the death of Jocasta; his Oedipus at Colonus lines 1579-1669, describing Oedipus' departure from life; Euripides, Herakles lines 910-15, reporting Herakles' murder of his children. This last example is particularly close. In Seneca, Thyestes, the Chorus also provide a means of breaking up a long Messenger speech (cf. Amphitryon in H.F. 640-829).

32. This is a feature common in Greek tragedy, "a wish to be elsewhere"; cf. the expression in lines 636ff. Compare the comments of E.R. Dodds on lines 402-16 in his edition of Euripides, Bacchae, 2nd edition (Oxford 1960).
33. Owen, pp.296ff. offers a good discussion of this motif of celestial phenomena in the Thyestes and he indicates how it becomes dominant towards the end of the play.
34. Owen, pp.297-8.
35. Thyestes, however, indicates the connection between crime and chaos in lines 1035f.
36. For the expression of nature overturned one may compare line 371 of Seneca, Oedipus,
natura versa est.
 The interplay between internal (psychological) and external phenomena is not uncommon in Senecan tragedy. This subject and the Stoic doctrine of sympatheia will be more properly dealt with in the chapter on philosophy.
37. As Dewey also notes, p.276, the language of "falling" is very evident in the section on the Zodiac.
38. Dewey, p.278, comments also on this fine contrast. Owen also notes it, p.298.
39. Thyestes echoes several of the Chorus' sentiments e.g. the precarious seat of power, 598ff. and 391-2, cf. 925-31; the fickleness of fortune, 596ff. and 615-6, cf. 939-41; the sea-imagery, 577, cf. 959-61.
40. The vengeance Thyestes prays for is similar to that which the gods directed against the Giants (1082ff.). The Chorus feared a renewal of the Giants' War in lines 804-6. The chaotic element in this war seems to be recurring (in the choral description and success of evil) whereas the compensating factor (for which Thyestes prays) of divine power re-asserting the rule of order does not recur.
41. Of Sophocles' three plays on the Atreus - Thyestes theme, one probably (Thyestes A) dealt with the next swing of the pendulum, Thyestes' fathering Aegisthus.

See A. Lesky "Die griechischen Pelopidendramen und Senecas Thyestes", Wiener Studien 43, (1922-23) pp.172-98.

CHAPTER II

1. Another reason for selecting Horace is that reminiscences of his poems and/or ideas are particularly relevant to the question of whether the moralising content of the ode can be attributed to a particular philosophy.
2. Each stanza consists of three lines of sapphics plus a final adonius. Further varieties of metre occur in Med. I, asclepiads, glyconics and dactylic hexameters. Ag. II seems to be written in alternating lines of anapaestic dimeters and monometers. See D.S. Raven, Latin Metre (London 1965) p.117.
3. J. Bishop, "The meaning of the choral meters in Senecan tragedy", Rh.M. 111 (1968) pp.197-219. Bishop includes criticism of W. Marx, Funktion und Form der Chorlieder in den Seneca - Tragödien (Köln 1932). Hereafter references to these works will be made by the author's name.
4. Bishop, p.197. This was also the argument of Marx whose ideas Bishop attempts to refine (p.210f.). Ethopoesis requires that a particular theme must be composed in a particular metre.
5. For example, a deity such as Cupido in Phaed. I or a tyrannical master as in Tr. III and IV. However, no references to masters are discernible in Tr. IV.
6. Many of the anapaestic odes, or at least parts of them, could come under the general heading applied to sapphics, especially those odes dealing with Fortuna or some aspect of it, e.g. Ag. I fallax Fortuna and Oed. V Fatis agimur: cedite fatis. Here Fortuna, or Fata, is a deity or external force whose activities or very existence affects man.
7. See Bishop, pp.211 and 217.
8. Oed. IV is distinctive among the glyconics since it follows a Catullan rather than a Horatian pattern. Horace standardised the opening spondee whereas Catullus had used trochees or spondees, e.g. in poems 34 and 61. Catullus also used a contraction of the central choriamb in the Phalaecian hendecasyllables, e.g. poems 55 and 58b. Oed. IV has a trochaic base throughout and several contractions.
9. See H.F. II 550ff. for a descriptive passage which also forms the bulk of an ode. This ode, addressed to Fortuna ... invida, is, in my opinion, a complaint rather than a prayer as Bishop states. The ode recounts the feats of Hercules who would represent the "power" according to Bishop.

10. Above pp.43-4, and footnote 6.
11. C.D.N. Costa, "The Tragedies" in Seneca, ed. Costa (London 1974) pp.96-115.
12. C.W. Mendell, Our Seneca (New Haven) 1941).
13. This division of words occurs also in Horace's odes, e.g. C. I 1 and III 30.
14. Lassus is the reading of MS E while A has lusus. Schroder uses A, while Giardina and Leo have lassus. The evidence for either reading is inconclusive. One has to decide on the better sense. I prefer the reading of E as my interpretation of the line shows. The idea of deception is adequately covered in the passage. This is indeed the famous aspect of Tantalus' suffering (line 159, deceptus totiens, Ag. line 20 ore decepto and H.F. line 754 decepto). However, I feel that line 152 by its very rhythm suggests the heaviness and weariness of lassus. The sound-pattern of "a", a gaping sound, may be felt to indicate tiredness as well as emptiness.
15. J.W. Loomis, Studies in Catullan Verse (Leiden 1972) pp.69-70.
16. H.V. Canter, 'Rhetorical Elements in the Tragedies of Seneca', University of Illinois, Studies in Language and Literature, X No. 1 (February 1925), pp.154ff. Hereafter this work will be referred to by the author's name.
17. Other examples of negative preamble are C. I 22.2-3, II 20.1-7 and IV 9.1-13; of negative anaphora, C. I 31.3-7.
18. The text of Catullus used is that of K. Quinn, Catullus, The Poems (London 1970).
19. Canter, pp.80f. He offers a detailed analysis of such references and their uses in the tragedies.
20. Their effectiveness is attested by the recurrence of such references in the drama of the Renaissance, e.g. Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine Part I, IV 3.1ff. et passim.
21. This is noted in a discussion of the other examples of adonii in the odes by F. Leo in "Die Composition der Chorlieder Senecas", Rh.M. L11 (1897) pp.509-18. See also Bishop p.204. In Thy. III the adonius would be the perfect cue if the play were being acted.
22. Chap. I, p.27.
23. N.T. Pratt, p.228 in "Major Systems of Figurative Language

- in Senecan Melodrama", TAPA 94 (1963) pp.199-234. He does not analyse the image of sea-storm in the play except for the passage in this ode.
24. Observations on the language and imagery connected with tumultus are made by J.P. Poe on pp.363ff., 372 and 374f. in "An Analysis of Seneca's Thyestes", TAPA 100 (1969) pp.355-86.
 25. Poe connects the idea with the theme of hunger and appetite which runs through the play. His theories will be dealt with again in Chap. III.
 26. See Appendix for a fuller discussion on the arrangement of the anapaestic lines.
 27. Of the lines which can be arranged with some certainty only lines 799, 804, 847, 861, 866-7 and 870 have this pattern of dactyls and spondees. In lines 847 and 870 one can detect the suitability of metre to theme. Line 799 describes the trumpet signal. The pattern in lines 866-7 is concluded by the spondaic line 868. These lines might reflect the rapidity of the falling stars and the sinister, terminating plunge into the sea.
 28. Examples of adjective and noun enclosing a line are:- solitae ... vices (813), sol ... occiduus (822), Leo ... ardens (855), iustaeque ... Librae (858), rupto ... nervo (862). Examples of adjective and noun framing a closely related word are:- aetherio pepulit cursu (802), insueto novus hospitio (821), sacris pervius astris (844).
 29. Such juxtapositions occur often in the works of Horace, e.g. C. I l.23 lituo tubae and C. II 18.10 pauperemque dives.
 30. S.F. Bonner, Roman Declamation (Liverpool 1949) p.163.
 31. G. Williams, The Third Book of Horace's Odes (Oxford 1969) p.22.
 32. E. Fraenkel, Horace (Oxford 1966) p.402.
 33. W.A. Camps, Propertius Elegies Book I (Cambridge 1969) pp.2-3. As examples of rhetorical elements he suggests the description of Love in Bk. II 12, the sermon on luxuria in Bk. III 13 and the imaginary letter in Bk. IV 3. As Camps stresses here these poems show a rhetorical influence but that, by itself, does not mean that they are mere exercises. This applies just as much to Seneca's odes.
 34. Bonner, pp.143f. and 149-56 records the observations of the elder Seneca and notes in detail some of the rhetorical elements in Ovid's poetry.

35. For biographical details and surveys of the Roman education system in Seneca's time see Canter p.11f., Costa, pp.98-100 and C.W. Mendell, Our Seneca (Yale University Press 1941, reprint Archon Books 1968) pp.54ff.
36. The importance of rhetorical expression is connected to the power-mad psychology of Senecan times by G. Braden in "The Rhetoric and Psychology of Power in the Dramas of Seneca", Arion 9 (1970) pp.5-41.
37. Williams, p.21 and p.84 note 2 on C. III 11 offers examples of the variety of effective word-order.
38. For examples of effective use of alliteration, word-order and metre in Virgil one might consider the examination of G. I 43-392 by L.P. Wilkinson, Golden Latin Artistry (Cambridge 1963) pp.74-83. Cf. pp.215-7 for discussion of the "golden line".
39. The works for reference are:- on Horace, J. Spika, De imitatione Horatiana in Senecae canticis chori (Vienna 1890) and A. Zingerle, "Zur Imitatio Horatiana", Chap. I of Zu späteren lateinischen Dichtern, Beiträge zur Geschichte der römischen Poesie, vol. I (Innsbrück 1873). Little is added to these by P. Keseling, "Horaz in den Tragödien des Seneca", Ph.W. 61 (1941) pp.190-2: on Virgil's influence, H.M.B. Ter Haar Romeny, De auctore tragoediarum quae sub Senecae nomine feruntur Vergilii imitatore (Leyden 1887). These works will hereafter be referred to by the author's name.
40. Some other parallels are C. I 1.10, C. II 10.5-10, C. III 16.18-19.
41. Cf. T.E. Page, Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Libri III, Epodon Liber (London 1970 edition) pp.160-1.
42. Cf. Alcaeus frgs. 6, 34a and 326 in the edition of D.A. Campbell, Greek Lyric Poetry (London 1967).
43. For the term lubricus, cf. Ovid Am. III 6.81 lubricus amnis.

CHAPTER III

1. Critics who stress the Stoicism of the plays are J.F. Brady, A Study of the Stoicism in Senecan Tragedy, Dissertation (Columbia University 1958); B. Marti, "Seneca's Tragedies - A New Interpretation", TAPA 76 (1945) pp.216-45; N.T. Pratt, "The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama", TAPA 79 (1948) pp.1-11. Hereafter these works will be referred to by the author's name.
2. A.L. Motto, Seneca (New York 1973) pp.18f. and 77-80, gives a full discussion of Seneca's eclecticism and also notes the divergences within the Stoic school itself. See also E.V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism (London 1911) p.106 on eclectic Stoics before Seneca and pp.115f. on the growing weakness in Stoicism in Seneca's time. These works will be referred to subsequently by the author's name.
3. The question of the will forms a current controversy in Senecan philosophy. F.H. Sandbach in The Stoics (London 1975) pp.159-60 finds some innovation in Seneca. Arnold p.115 finds none. An account of the problem is offered by J.M. Rist, Stoic Philosophy (Cambridge 1969) pp.219-32, who denies any new Senecan teaching on the will.
4. His only references to Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides occur in N.Q. IV 2.17 on the rising of the Nile. Their drama is not discussed. Marti is quite wrong in stating that Seneca used the dramatic form to illustrate "what he taught in the less popular" prose works (p.219). For evidence of the popularity of his prose see Motto p.19 and Suetonius, Caligula 53.2; Arnold p.114 with Quintilian, Inst. Orat. X 1.125.
5. N.T. Pratt, pp.1 and 8 especially, and throughout.
6. Ulrich Knoche, "Senecas Atreus, ein Beispiel" in Senecas Tragödien ed. E. Lefèvre (Darmstadt 1972) pp.477-89. He discusses the philosophy of Ode II on p.483, describing the Chorus as presenting the "Standpunkt des einfachen Mannes" (cf. line 400 plebeius ... senex).
7. Motto, pp.42-48 discusses fully the charges against Seneca and acquits him. See De Vit. Bea. 23.1 for Seneca's justification for wealthy philosophers and, conversely, his criticism of wealth in Ep. 115 passim.
8. The edition is that of J.D. Denniston and D. Page (re-printed Oxford 1968). Page discusses the theme in earlier Greek literature on p.136.
9. Cf. Page, pp.111-2, noting the common occurrence of such hopes in Greek literature of the fifth-century.

10. Knoche, p.481 (cf. p.479 "wider die Natur").
11. Marti, p.229. For some reason she omits the Thyestes from her category of passion plays. She has arbitrarily divided the plays into groups, each presenting a particular Stoic thought. Her thesis depends entirely on the order of the plays in MS E, which cannot be relied on as authentic.
12. G. Braden, p.17 in "The Rhetoric and Psychology of Power in the Dramas of Seneca", Arion 9 (1970) pp.5-41.
13. Knoche, p.480 summarises the situation with the comment, "in Atreus die Weltordnung auf den Kopf gestellt".
14. Other references to the Stoic parity between sapiens and god occur in De Prov. 1.5 and 6.6 deum anteceditis; De Const. 8.2 and Ep. 124.23 the animus ... emendatus ac purus is aemulator dei.
15. Leon Herrmann, Le Théâtre de Sénèque (Paris 1924) p.401.
16. J.P. Poe, "An Analysis of Seneca's Thyestes", TAPA 100 (1969) pp.355-76. See p.361 on "sadistic voluptas" and Atreus.
17. W. Steidle, "Die Gestalt des Thyest" in Senecas Tragödien, ed. E. Lefèvre (Darmstadt 1972) pp.490-9. He states that Thyestes is on a plane with his brother (p.492) and in view of the evidence in the play Thyestes is not a σοφός (p.497).
18. For line 457 compare Horace C. II 16.1; lines 459-60 compare C. III 1.33-4; line 469 compare C. II 16.13 vivitur parvo bene and C. II 10.20 rebus angustis.
19. J. Dingel, Seneca und die Dichtung (Heidelberg 1974) pp.84-90 on the Thyestes places great emphasis on the "Hass der Götter" and the gods' causing human crime and suffering. In order to demonstrate "die Negation der Philosophie" he perhaps over-stresses the will of the gods in the actions of the characters.
20. See D.J. Conacher, Euripidean Drama (Toronto 1967) pp.27-55 on the Hippolytus. The Prologue is discussed pp.27-9.
21. Knoche, pp.488-9 discusses the symbolic nature of the Prologue and states that it has no alleviating effect on Atreus' responsibility.
22. For Fortuna as a deity see Cicero, N.D. 3.24.61 quo in genere vel maxime est Fortuna numeranda and Horace, Sat. II 8.61 heu, Fortuna, quis est crudelior in nos / te deus? For dea Fors see Ovid, F. 6.775. There was a temple to this goddess at Rome.

23. For example, Poe p.374 discusses the theme in the light of O. Regenbogen's comments. The latter's article is "Schmerz und Tod in den Tragödien Senecas", Kleine Schriften, ed. F. Dirlmeier (Munich 1961) pp.409-62.
24. Chrysippus declared that the individual human nature was a part of the nature of all (cf. Arnold p.95). Heraclitus stated that man and the universe were controlled by Logos (cf. Arnold p.240) and it was Aristotle who formed the idea of man being a microcosm within a macrocosm (Phys. VIII 2.252b.).
25. Cf. W.H. Owen in "Commonplace and Dramatic Symbol in Seneca's Tragedies", TAPA 99 (1968) pp.291-313. On p.293 he comments on the conventional theme of the "heavens as a reflection of moral order or disorder in the world of man." Thus deities show grief (cf. Tr. 239-40) or shame (cf. Thy. 776f. and 793f. and Ag. 36, 53-6).
26. Cf. also Aeschylus, Ag. 122f.
27. In conjunction with such observations one might consider also appeals to relatively inanimate objects as being somehow sentient and capable of reaction. Thyestes in line 1068f. appeals to sea, gods and earth to avenge him by reacting. Similar cries can be detected in Euripides, Her. 891 and 894 to a roof and house; and in Aeschylus, Ag. 1538 f. the Chorus exclaim, after Agamemnon's murder,
- τὼ γὰ γὰ, εἴθ' ἔμ' ἔδέξω,
πρὶν τοῦδ' ἐπιδέϊν
28. It is interesting that the Euripidean Chorus scorn the idea of this eclipse showing divine displeasure. λέγεται they say in line 737. Such stories, however, have κέρδος since they can inspire reverence and obedience. In his prose Seneca similarly scorns the idea about angry gods (N.Q. VII 1.2) but he gives little value at all to such tales.
29. See O. Ribbeck, Scaenicae Romanorum Poesis Fragmenta, vol. I "Tragicorum Fragmenta" (Hildesheim 1962) p.165, frg. XIII (6). Accius' fragment is worth the critic's notice even if it seems improbable that Seneca was familiar with it.
30. The idea of world conflagration might have been stressed in view of the Chorus' cry of aetas ultima (877-8). But this idea, though particularly Stoic, has its roots in tradition. The end of the play gives no evidence of a conflagration more philosophic in its symbolism than, perhaps, Aeschylus, P.V.
31. On the isolation of the ideal in Ode II one might refer to Dewey's remarks in The Chorus in Senecan Tragedy

Exclusive of Hercules Oetaeus and Octavia (Columbia University 1968) p.265. She describes it as "a sort of moral oasis" and says that "the Chorus will be the unheeded voice of sanity and philosophical truth in a rising crescendo of evil".

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APPENDIX

This discussion is a brief outline of the problem regarding the arrangement of the anapaests in Ode IV. The texts of Leo and Giardina report the two manuscript traditions, A and E, as follows. E and A agree in dividing lines 789-828 as dimeters. E then gives lines 829-30 as a trimeter and the remainder of the ode as dimeters. Giardina essentially follows the example of E but he offers a monometer in line 829 and a dimeter in line 830. The A MSS, however, gives line 829 as a dimeter (percussa ... fatali). The subsequent dimeters (up to 842) are therefore different from E's. Line 843, turba deorum, is given by A as a monometer. However, from line 844 to 876, A and E are in agreement as to the dimeters. In the final section (877-84) A has two monometers.

There is, therefore, agreement on the dimeters in lines 789-828 and 844-76. In these sections there is no hiatus or final short syllable coinciding with a caesura, which is the rule with anapaests (cf. Raven pp.116-7 and Giardina's edition p.751). As regards the problem passages, Giardina's (and E's) arrangement of the lines 829-30 seems acceptable as this puts the syllaba anceps in chaos (832) at the end of a line instead of before a caesura as in the A tradition. On the other hand, A's arrangement in lines 877-84 might be better as it avoids the syllaba anceps of venit (878) occurring before the caesura. However, one cannot be certain about these divisions.

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